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American Indians and Alaska Natives: A Guide to USDA Programs

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Preface

American Indians and Alaska Natives: A Guide to USDA Programs is a reference for American Indian and Alaska Native tribal leaders and members, planners, community leaders, producers, and others who work with American Indians and Alaska Natives on any of the numerous USDA programs available to the Native American community. The *Guide* is intended as a resource for decisionmakers seeking to identify USDA programs that will best serve an individual or community's needs as well as for facilitating improved access to USDA programs and services.

President George W. Bush's administration continues to work with tribal governments, providing American Indians and Alaska Natives with new economic and educational opportunities. Indian education programs remain a priority, so that no American child—and no Native American child—is left behind.

The Bush Administration has worked hard to see that Native Americans have access to economic and educational opportunities, investing more than \$177 million in distance learning and telemedicine programs so that 3,635 rural education facilities could expand their access to modern telecommunications technology and 1,650 health care institutions could develop technologies needed to enhance local medical care.

The Administration has also taken the following steps to enhance partnerships with Indian tribes:

- President Bush signed an Executive Memorandum on July 3, 2002, for Tribal colleges and universities, ensuring that his administration will continue to maintain a close relationship with Indian tribes.
- The President established the Klamath River Basin Federal Working Group on March 1, 2002, to address concerns among the tribes as well as farmers and fishermen about the drought in the basin.
- President Bush signed an Executive Memorandum on September 23, 2004, reiterating his Administration's adherence to a government-to-government relationship and support for tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

In President Bush's 2005 proclamation of National American Indian Heritage Month, he announced a move to enhance energy opportunities and a desire to strengthen tribal economies. The President also stated that his administration is working to ease the barriers associated with tribal energy development. The President signed the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which allocated \$2 billion in the form of grants, loans, and loan guarantees for exploration, development, and production of energy to ensure that the latest technologies are being used throughout the United States.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is finalizing \$3 million in funds for States and Tribes to conduct field trials in animal identification. APHIS has already awarded \$27 million in funds to States and Tribes to advance the National Animal Identification Initiative.

In his 2001 proclamation for National American Indian Heritage Month, President Bush stated,

Since our Nation's birth, pluralism and diversity have been hallmarks of the American experience and success. In 1782, the Founding Fathers chose as our national motto "E Pluribus Unum," which means "out of many, one." Today, America's unity, derived from a mix of many diverse cultures and people, grandly embodies the vision expressed by our Founders. American Indian and Alaska Native cultures have made remarkable contributions to our national identity. Their unique spiritual, artistic, and literary contributions, together with their vibrant customs and celebrations, enliven and enrich our land.

President Bush believes that education is the key to a successful nation, and that is why he has provided Indian nations with funds for school construction and signed an Executive Order to help Indian children and college students reach their highest potential through education.

On September 21, 2004, the Nation celebrated the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. On September 23, 2004, in honor of the opening of the Museum, President Bush welcomed a number of tribal leaders, congressional representatives, Government officials, and others to the White House, stating:

The National Museum of Indian Affairs affirms that this young country is home to an ancient, noble and enduring native culture. And all Americans are proud of that culture. Like many Indian dwellings, the new museum building faces east, toward the rising sun. And as we celebrate this new museum and we look to the future, we can say that the sun is rising on Indian country.

USDA is pleased to offer this *Guide* for the use of Native American and Alaska Native communities throughout the Nation.

Introduction

American Indians and Alaska Natives: A Guide to USDA Programs describes the vast array of USDA programs and services available to American Indian and Alaska Native communities. As we look into the future, it is important to acknowledge the past and to identify historical highlights of American Indian agriculture and the contributions that American Indian farmers have made not only to the United States but also to the world. These highlights provide an important context for American Indian agriculture today and suggest how USDA can work in partnership with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis to further the development of American Indian and Alaska Native agriculture.

Indians were the first farmers in North America, and agriculture has been a mainstay of the American Indian culture and economy for thousands of years. In fact, the Indians of Central America and Mexico were engaged in agriculture 7,000 years before Europeans settled in the present-day United States.

Archaeological evidence indicates that American Indians began farming in what later became the continental United States by 5000 B.C., using indigenous agricultural practices as well as practices learned from Mexican and Central American cultures. By A.D. 1000, American Indian farmers had developed a productive and complex agricultural system based on corn, beans, and squash, commonly referred to as the “three sisters.” These American Indian farmers were primarily women; the men hunted and fished.

There has been variety in American Indian agriculture and economies. Before contact with European civilization, American Indians in the Northern United States cultivated the river valleys and flood plains with bones, wooden hoes, and digging sticks. American Indian women raised traditional crops consisting of beans, squash, and many varieties of corn—the most important crop. Furthermore, in the upper Great Lakes, the Ojibwa (Chippewa) and the Assiniboine sowed, harvested, dried, threshed, and stored wild rice. Over time, American Indian farmers in the Southern United States cultivated squash and bottle gourds and traded them in market centers.

American Indians used highly developed agricultural methods and practices. The Southwest Indian farmers developed a new type of corn, which provided the foundation for southwestern Indian civilization; cultivated several varieties of squash and beans; grew cotton; developed water-conservation practices; and used several methods of irrigation. From A.D. 800 to 1400, the Hohokam Indians in the Southwest, called the “canal builders,” constructed major systems of irrigation canals that were 150 miles long or more. Although the Plains Indians relied mainly on hunting and gathering, by A.D. 1000 the Indians of the central Plains practiced well-developed agriculture—with corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and tobacco being the important crops.

R. Douglas Hurt, writing on “The Native American Experience” in *American Agriculture: A Brief History*, states:

In retrospect, the history of Indian agriculture is the story of supreme achievement. Nearly three millennia before the arrival of white settlers, Native American farmers learned to cultivate plants of local and Mesoamerican origins. They discovered how to select the seeds that would yield maximum harvests in local soil and climatic conditions. By so doing, they made great strides toward farming in harmony with nature.

When Hernando DeSoto's expedition landed on the coast of Florida in 1539, his food supply was nearly depleted. American Indian agriculture was so bountiful that the Spaniards appropriated a 3-month supply of corn from the fields, enabling the expedition to continue. Later, the American Indian farmers showed European settlers which plants to cultivate, particularly corn, beans, pumpkins, and tobacco, and how to make maple sugar and prepare hominy.

American Indian agriculture has had a significant effect on agriculture and the economy worldwide. Jack Weatherford, in his book *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World*, pointed out that Indians cultivated more than 300 food crops and contributed to the world three-fifths of the crops now in cultivation. The Indian farmers of North and South America gave the world corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, beans, pumpkins, squash, chocolate, vanilla, papayas, persimmons, jicama, pecans, chilies, hickory nuts, peanuts, cassava, sunflower seeds, maple syrup, tapioca, and avocados.

American Indian agricultural crops have spread from American farmers to farmers in other parts of the world. Today, farmers grow corn over a larger area of the world than any other cultivated food. The white potato spread from Bolivia and Peru to Ireland and across Europe to Russia, providing more calories and nutrition per acre than any grain. Corn and cassava contributed to the increase in Africa's population in the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. Sweet potatoes and corn were cultivated in areas in Asia where rice did not grow. Farmers grew corn, sweet potatoes, peanuts, tomatoes, and chilies in new areas of China. Today, many countries are economically dependent on these American Indian crops.

Clearly, American Indians' historic agricultural achievements have made important contributions to the United States and the world. These accomplishments provide an instructive perspective on USDA's government-to-government relations with Indian tribes.

USDA programs and services available to members of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes are described in the following pages. USDA administers these programs through seven mission areas: Natural Resources and Environment; Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services; Rural Development; Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services; Food Safety; Research, Education, and Economics; and Marketing and Regulatory Programs. USDA staff offices supporting USDA in implementing programs in all of these areas include the Office of Congressional Relations' Office of External and Intergovernmental Relations, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, and Departmental Administration, as well as other offices.

1. Office of Congressional Relations

The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Office of Congressional Relations serves as the Department's liaison with members of Congress and their staffs. This office also works closely with the members and staffs of various House and Senate Committees—including the House Agriculture Committee and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry—to communicate USDA's legislative agenda and budget proposals.

The Office of Congressional Relations includes the Office of External and Intergovernmental Relations and, within it, the Office of Native American Programs. Each of these offices and its activities is described briefly below.

Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs

The Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs (OEIA) is USDA's liaison with State, local, and tribal governments and with national organizations representing these constituents. OEIA responds to inquiries and requests from officials of these groups either directly or through the appropriate government agencies. OEIA also facilitates meetings between such groups and USDA officials and serves as a clearinghouse for information related to USDA's operations and services.

Office of Native American Programs

USDA's interaction with Indian tribes is governed by the President's Executive Memorandum on Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments (Appendix 1) and by USDA's Departmental Regulation 1340-006, "Policies on American Indians and Alaska Natives" (Appendix 2). USDA's "Policies on American Indians and Alaska Natives" states that the Office of Native American Programs has primary responsibility for coordinating USDA programs serving American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The position of Director of Native American Programs is located under the Office of the Secretary in the Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs. The Director of Native American Programs, who serves as USDA's primary contact with tribal governments and their members, is responsible for:

- Serving as the principal adviser and representative on all matters related to USDA policies and programs that affect and are available to American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Meeting with tribal representatives regarding policy, program delivery, and services to Indian tribes; facilitating opportunities for tribal representatives to meet with the Secretary of Agriculture and other USDA officials; and providing appropriate staff assistance.

- Working with the Office of Congressional Relations and the Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs, with the USDA mission areas, and with USDA's Office of Communications to develop materials and communicate information about USDA programs and services directly to all federally recognized Indian tribes, intertribal organizations, and the American Indian and Alaska Native news media.
- Chairing USDA's Native American Working Group, which reports to the Secretary. The Native American Working Group provides advice, support, and other assistance to the Director to help coordinate and guide USDA policies and programs that affect Indian tribes.
- Participating in meetings, conferences, and events conducted by Indian tribes, national and regional intertribal organizations, USDA, and other Federal Government departments.
- Participating in subgroups of the Working Group on American Indians and Alaska Natives, which President Bush established as part of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. The purpose of the working group is to share and coordinate information on Indian tribes and programs, to provide a forum for resolution of issues among Federal agencies, to ensure the implementation of Presidential directives on American Indian policy, and to promote initiatives to better serve Indian tribes and their members.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: Director of Native American Programs, Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of Congressional Relations, USDA, Room 544-A, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-690-1615; fax: 202-720-7170; e-mail: Patrick.Atagi@usda.gov).

Administering Agency: Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs, USDA, Room 219-A, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-6643).

2. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR), an office authorized by Section 10704 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (“Farm Bill”), is the key advisor to the Secretary on matters concerning civil rights and equal employment opportunity as it relates to employment and delivery of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and services.

The ASCR is responsible for ensuring that all agencies and programs of the Department are in compliance with all civil rights and related laws; for coordinating the administration of civil rights laws and regulations for employees and participants of USDA programs; and for ensuring that necessary and appropriate civil rights components are properly incorporated into all strategic planning initiatives within the Department.

In addition, the ASCR works to ensure that all aspects of the President’s Management Agenda Initiatives—*Strategic Management of Human Capital, Competitive Sourcing, Improved Financial Performance, Expanded Electronic Government, and Budget and Performance Integration*—are implemented within the organization.

ASCR is composed of the Office of Civil Rights; the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center; and the Office of Outreach. Each of these offices and its activities is described briefly below.

Office of Civil Rights

The Office of Civil Rights provides coordination and leadership for the Department in the civil rights arena, implements and interprets civil rights policies established in conjunction with the ASCR, provides technical assistance and training to USDA agencies, oversees compliance with civil rights laws and regulations, and investigates, adjudicates, and resolves administrative complaints of discrimination brought by USDA employees and customers.

It is the policy of USDA that all employees and customers shall be free from reprisal or discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, political beliefs, parental status, receipt of public assistance, or protected genetic information (not all bases apply to all programs). No person is to be subjected to prohibited discrimination in employment or in programs conducted by USDA or programs that receive Federal financial assistance from USDA.

Special Emphasis Programs

The Special Emphasis Program Managers are located in the Office of Civil Rights. They coordinate special emphasis observance events, oversee affirmative employment activities, and assist with special projects such as compliance reviews and annual reports. The Special Emphasis Program Managers also have primary responsibility for completing the activities set forth in the *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Management Directive 715* for achieving a Model EEO Program.

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center

The Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC) helps USDA customers and employees to better handle conflict. The ultimate purpose of the CPRC is to resolve workplace and programmatic disputes.

To reach this goal, the CPRC focuses on developing employee skills for managing conflict effectively and on using alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods to resolve disputes. The CPRC works to increase the use of ADR in USDA by promoting awareness of its benefits, with emphasis on fairness, use of a neutral third party in the dispute resolution process, and confidentiality. Additional information is available on the ASCR Web site (<http://www.ascr.usda.gov>; use “CPRC” as a search term.)

Office of Outreach

The Office of Outreach provides national leadership and coordination for programs and services across USDA to ensure equal and timely access to USDA programs for all constituents, with emphasis on the underserved. The office works proactively with community and faith-based organizations, minority-serving colleges and universities, and other governmental agencies to promote partnerships and strategic solutions to outreach challenges. USDA outreach programs include the 1890 and 1994 programs, which are described below.

USDA/1890 Program

The USDA/1890 Program aims to:

- Attract minority students into careers in agriculture and related fields, including food sciences and agricultural sciences.
- Share expertise and resources in areas such as agricultural research, extension and teaching programs, technology development, limited-resource farmer and minority farmer programs, and rural development programs.
- Increase the involvement of the 1890 Land-Grant Institutions and Tuskegee University in the delivery of USDA programs.

For additional information about the USDA/1890 Program, contact: USDA/1890 Program, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9478, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-205-5692; e-mail: 1890init@usda.gov).

USDA/1994 Program

The USDA/1994 Program aims to:

- Attract American Indian students into careers in agriculture and related fields, including food and agricultural sciences.
- Share expertise and resources in areas such as agricultural research, extension and teaching programs, technology development, limited-resource farmer and minority farmer programs, and rural development programs.
- Increase the involvement of the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions in the delivery of USDA programs.

For additional information about the USDA/1994 Land-Grant Institutions (Tribal Colleges) Program, contact: USDA/1994 Program Office, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9477, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-4679; fax: 202-205-3831).

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Margo McKay, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Room 240W, Whitten Building, USDA, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-3808; fax: 202-690-1782; e-mail: Margo.McKay@usda.gov). Additional key contacts include Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Annabelle Romero (202-720-3808; Annabelle.Romero@usda.gov); Associate Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Clyde Thompson (202-720-3808; Clyde.Thompson@usda.gov); Office of Civil Rights Director Sadhna True (202-720-5212; Sadhna.True@usda.gov); American Indian/Alaska Native Program Manager Richard Regan (202-720-1670; Richard.Regan@usda.gov); USDA/1994 Program Director Yolanda Garcia (202-720-7265; Yolanda.Garcia@usda.gov); Office of Outreach Director Gladys Gary Vaughn (202-205-6350; Gladys.Vaughn@usda.gov); and Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center Director Dale Gentry (202-720-4040; Dale.Gentry@usda.gov).

Administering Agency: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Room 240-W, Whitten Building, USDA, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-3808; fax: 202-690-1782; Web site: <http://www.ascr.usda.gov>).

3. Departmental Administration

Departmental Administration is USDA's central administrative management organization. It provides support to policy officials of the Department as well as overall direction and coordination for USDA administrative programs and services. In addition, Departmental Administration manages the USDA Headquarters Complex and provides direct customer service to Washington, D.C.-area USDA employees.

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

The USDA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), located within Departmental Administration, was established on June 26, 1979, and tasked with responsibility for fostering the use of small and small disadvantaged (OSDBU) businesses as Federal contractors. OSDBU provides Departmentwide leadership in the implementation and execution of programs under Sections 8 and 15 of the Small Business Act, as amended. OSDBU's goal is to provide as much information, guidance, and technical assistance as possible to assist the small business community in increasing its competitiveness through increased participation in USDA's procurement and program activities.

OSDBU Customer and Outreach Services include the following:

- Guides and advises small business representatives on strategies for marketing to USDA agencies.
- Coordinates and monitors the small business program for the Department.
- Identifies and eliminates contracting barriers that prevent or severely restrict small businesses' access to USDA procurements.
- Updates small businesses on contracting regulations.
- Educates small businesses on how to obtain certifications.
- Promotes the use of small business, section 8(a), HUBZone, and service-disabled veteran-owned small business set-asides.
- Mediates disputes between contractors and the contracting activity to resolve misunderstandings.
- Publishes, updates, and disseminates brochures, fact sheets, and forecasts for USDA's contracting programs.
- Holds Monthly Vendor Outreach Sessions. These sessions give small businesses the opportunity to meet on a regularly scheduled basis with USDA contracting officials. At these sessions, USDA is introduced to new businesses that procurement offices may use to increase their small business resource base. Additionally, small businesses are

provided marketing strategies and information on how to market their capabilities to USDA in one central location.

- Hosts First Tuesday Trade Association Meetings. These meetings are designed to provide various trade associations an opportunity to voice their concerns, opinions, and ideas concerning current small business issues and to take their findings back to the small businesses they represent.

Federal Small Business Programs

Federal Small Business Set-aside Programs permit competition on certain solicitations among small businesses only. These programs are described briefly below.

Section 8(a) Program

The Section 8(a) Program (started in 1968 under the authority of Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act, as amended) is administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA). The 8(a) program allows USDA to enter into contracts for supplies and services with SBA, which then subcontracts these requirements to approved socially and economically disadvantaged firms.

Small Disadvantaged Business Program

The Small Disadvantaged Business Program allows the Department to take a proactive role in ensuring that contracts are competitively awarded to disadvantaged businesses. Prime contractors can receive evaluation credit for using SBA-certified small disadvantaged business subcontractors.

Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

Congress has enacted two laws and the President has issued an Executive Order to assist small businesses owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans. The Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (P.L. 106–50) set a 3-percent Federal-wide procurement goal for contracts and subcontracts for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs).

The Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 (P.L. 108–183) enables SDVOSBs to receive sole-source and restricted-competition contracts for goods and services used by the U.S. Government. Executive Order 13360 (Service-Disabled Veterans Executive Order) provides increased Federal contracting and subcontracting opportunities for service-disabled veteran businesses.

Women-Owned Business Program

The Women-Owned Business Program requires best-faith effort to increase procurements from women-owned firms by apprising them of opportunities to bid on solicitations. A Federal 5-percent contracting goal is mandated for small women-owned businesses.

Historically Underutilized Business Zone Program

The Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Program is the SBA program for qualified small businesses located in historically underutilized business zones. The program is designed to increase employment opportunities, stimulate capital investment in those areas, and empower communities by creating and sustaining successful small business enterprises. To participate in the HUBZone Program, a business must be a “qualified HUBZone small business concern.”

A firm can qualify as a HUBZone concern if: (1) it is small, (2) it is located in a “historically underutilized business zone” (HUBZone), (3) it is owned and controlled by one or more U.S. citizens; and (4) at least 35 percent of its employees reside in a HUBZone.

The Subcontracting Program

The Subcontracting Program requires prime contractors (except small businesses) with contracts over \$500,000 (\$1 million for construction) to establish subcontracting plans that provide the maximum utilization of small business concerns.

The Small Business Competitiveness Program

This program studies the ability of small businesses to compete successfully in four designated industry groups: Construction, Refuse Systems and Related Services, Architectural and Engineering Services (including surveying and mapping), and Ship Building and Repair. The purpose is to increase procurements in 10 industry categories lacking small business participation. USDA’s targeted industry categories are Maintenance and Repair/Automated Data Processing (ADP) Equipment, Installation of ADP Equipment, Technology Studies, Other Photo/Mapping/ Printing Services, Vocational/Technical Training, Leasing Special Industrial Machinery, Chemical Products, ADP Central Processing Units, Bags and Sacks, and Outerwear (Men’s).

Additional Information

Whom to Contact: Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, Departmental Administration, USDA, Room 1085, South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-7117; toll-free line: 1-877-99OSDBU; fax: 202-720-3001; Web site: <http://www.usda.gov/da/smallbus>).

Administering Agency: Departmental Administration, USDA, Room 209-A, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-3291; fax: 202-720-2191; <http://www.usda.gov/da>).

4. Natural Resources and Environment

For many reasons, Native American and Alaska Native tribes realize that living in harmony with nature is no simple task, but they continue to be prime keepers of the environment, watching over their lands' natural resources for future generations. Native American communities currently hold 4 percent of U.S. land and constitute the second-largest holding interest after the Federal Government.

Natural resources on tribal lands are culturally and historically sensitive areas for tribal communities. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Forest Service recognize these concerns and identify with the conservation issues and policies involved.

Over the past two decades, NRCS has implemented an extensive joint outreach effort with the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC), the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA), and other partners to increase awareness of USDA services available to American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The IAC and INCA are nonprofit corporations and/or organizations of member Indian tribes devoted to improving conservation and agriculture as a source of economic development for American Indian communities.

NRCS has designated full-time American Indian Liaisons in regions significantly populated by Native Americans to work more closely with the IAC, INCA, tribal leaders, and tribal members. The agency continues to work with tribal governments and their leaders to establish new Tribal Conservation Districts under tribal law. Currently, there are 26 Tribal Districts, and several more are under development.

NRCS and the Forest Service will continue to manage Federal programs that attempt to meet tribal demands for improved environmental quality. These include environmental and conservation amenities—such as the conservation of crop, pasture, and rangelands; rural landscape services; wildlife habitat; wetlands; and improved water and air quality—along with food, fiber, and timber production.

NRCS and the Forest Service also have a strong commitment that extends well beyond the traditional farm and ranch homestead. These agencies seek to engage in ongoing Government-to-Government consultation with Indian Nations to accommodate traditional, historical, and cultural values and to deliver technical assistance and programs effectively to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a Federal agency, was created in 1935 within USDA as the Soil Conservation Service. In 1994, the agency's name was changed to the Natural Resources Conservation Service to better reflect the current role of the agency.

NRCS works through local conservation districts to address natural resource problems by providing financial and technical assistance to individuals, groups, organizations, cities, towns,

States, and tribal governments. NRCS also works with Native Americans and Alaska Natives to conserve the natural resources on their lands.

The agency helps land users and tribal communities approach conservation planning and implementation with an understanding of how natural resources relate to one another and how those activities affect us all. NRCS is dedicated to helping people and cultures utilize partnerships and technology to ensure the future of a healthy environment.

The 2002 Farm Bill promotes conservation of natural resources on agricultural land and land under the jurisdiction of a federally recognized Indian tribe. It provides for voluntary participation, offers incentives, and focuses on equity in accessing all USDA programs and services. NRCS recognizes that federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes have a special relationship with the U.S. Government.

NRCS Programs

The scope of environmental concerns has expanded over the last few years to include a wider range of NRCS conservation policy instruments and cultural values, which are now used to address conservation issues. American Indians and Alaska Natives are eligible to participate in all of these NRCS programs and may have unique status as provided by statute or regulation.

The Secretary of Agriculture may also provide special incentives for federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and beginning or limited-resource farmers and ranchers to encourage participation in conservation programs, special projects, or innovative activities. Enhanced NRCS programs include streamlined delivery of technical and financial assistance; improved programs and services; and flexibility in decisionmaking, with most decisions made locally at the tribal, State, or local levels.

NRCS assistance is provided in a range of areas, including conservation planning on cropland, pastureland, and rangeland; application of rangeland management and improvement practices; irrigation water development structures and management; brush control; erosion control structures; agriculture; forestry; salinity control; land treatment for watershed program activities; no-till conservation tillage; soil interpretation for various land uses; farmland protection; wildlife habitat improvement; and wetlands restoration.

NRCS also provides technical assistance and works closely with individual landowners and operators, organizations, and city, county, State, and tribal governments to ensure that soil and water conservation practices are carried out according to specifications while community values are also taken into consideration.

The majority of NRCS' work is conducted through more than 3,000 local soil and water conservation districts in the United States. NRCS also provides technical and financial help for watershed protection and flood prevention, along with the other conservation programs. Natural resource information is available to tribal land use officials for planning and maintaining housing, schools, water supply, highways, and recreational facilities.

NRCS's National Tribal Relations Coordinator works with Indian tribes, the Intertribal Agricultural Council, the Indian Nation Conservation Alliance, and other American Indian groups and organizations to increase participation in NRCS programs.

In addition, most States with federally recognized tribal reservations within their exterior boundaries have a State and/or local American Indian Outreach Coordinator. These individuals are available to help tribes become familiar with and access NRCS programs and services. The Outreach Coordinators are in contact with each tribe in their areas to provide assistance and to evaluate their agencies' ability to better serve tribal needs. The Outreach Coordinators can be reached at the State NRCS offices or in a local office in the State in which your tribal headquarters is located.

Primary NRCS programs are described below. Additional information on any of these programs is available on the NRCS Web site (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>) or from your local NRCS office, State NRCS office, Tribal or Local Conservation District, Conservation District office, or nearest USDA Service Center. USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings (look for "U.S. Department of Agriculture").

Technical Assistance Program

Through its field offices and local conservation districts, NRCS has assisted numerous tribal and individual landowners who need information to better facilitate the adoption or use of more environmentally sound conservation practices. NRCS has helped tribal land owners and agricultural operators plan and apply more than 100 types of conservation practices to manage, conserve, improve, and develop soil, water, and related resources. Educational and technical assistance has provided data on soil quality, water quality, and wildlife habitat and has facilitated the dissemination of information on ways to use that data and as well as ways to apply sustainable production techniques and new technologies.

NRCS has expertise in resource assessment and planning, agronomy, range management, forestry, agricultural engineering, soils, water management, wildlife habitat management, recreation, aquaculture, rural development, resource inventories, and watershed and flood protection. The Service generally provides technical assistance to American Indian communities through tribal and other local conservation districts and through tribal governments and departments that handle natural resource and agriculture conservation programs in addition to other rural development activities.

Technical Service Providers

The 2002 Farm Bill authorizes certified Technical Service Providers (private individuals, nongovernmental organizations, and Tribal, State, or local governments) to provide assistance to agricultural producers and landowners and to receive payments for that service. The intent is to increase the number of qualified technical experts available to help tribal and individual landowners conserve natural resources on their lands.

Several tribes have taken advantage of this certification program to hire non-NRCS personnel as technical consultants to help satisfy a portion of their unmet conservation needs. These technical service conservation agents are often tribal members.

Tribes are also utilizing their natural resource, environmental, and agriculture departments to contract with NRCS for Technical Service Providers to help meet the tribe's environmental conservation needs. Tribes that utilize this program can also ensure that tribal, cultural, and traditional values will be considered when applying conservation needs and services.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill to provide a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. This program offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants in installing or implementing structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends 1 year after the implementation of the last scheduled practices and a maximum term of 10 years. These contracts provide incentive and cost-share payments to implement conservation practices. Persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in EQIP.

Participating producers follow an EQIP plan of operations that they help develop and that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or practices for addressing their resource concerns. Planned practices are subject to NRCS technical standards that have been adapted to local conditions. The local conservation district approves the plan.

EQIP may cost-share up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices. Incentive payments may be provided for up to 3 years to encourage producers to carry out management practices they may not otherwise use without the incentive. However, limited-resource producers and beginning farmers and ranchers may be eligible for cost-shares of up to 90 percent. Farmers and ranchers may elect to use a certified third-party provider for technical assistance. An individual or entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, cost-share or incentive payments that, in the aggregate, exceed \$450,000 for all EQIP contracts entered into during the term of the Farm Bill. Tribes and Alaska Native corporations may exceed the \$450,000 limitation on condition that they certify that no individual directly or indirectly exceeds the \$450,000 limit.

In addition, the program offers a Conservation Innovative Grants (CIG) component that is intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies. Under CIG, competitive grants are awarded yearly to non-Federal governmental and nongovernmental organizations, tribes, and individuals who work with NRCS to address some of the Nation's most pressing natural resource concerns.

Conservation Security Program

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill. CSP, a voluntary program administered by NRCS, provides financial and technical assistance to producers who advance the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, and plant and animal life and who promote other conservation purposes on tribal and private working lands. Such lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, and rangeland as well as forested land and other noncropped areas that are an incidental part of an agricultural operation.

Agricultural producers are important stewards of America's working lands, and CSP supports this ongoing stewardship by providing financial and technical assistance for producers to maintain and enhance resources. The purpose of CSP is to:

- Identify and reward farmers and ranchers meeting the very highest standards of conservation and environmental management, particularly in the ongoing production of clean water and clean air.
- Create powerful incentives for other producers to meet those same standards of conservation performance on their operations.
- Provide public benefits for generations to come.

The program is available to all eligible producers on privately owned or tribal lands in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands of the United States, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Grazing Land Conservation Initiative

The Grazing Land Conservation Initiative provides technical, educational, and related assistance to those who own and manage private grazing land. Healthy and productive grazing land is a substantial component of the agricultural economy and is the largest of all agricultural land uses, with more than 575 million acres being grazed in the United States.

Technical assistance supports and encourages better grazing management, improved livestock production, protection of the soil from wind and water erosion, reduction of drought impacts, control of invasive weeds, and the use of energy-efficient production techniques. It also provides opportunities for water conservation, wildlife habitat development, stream bank protection, and water quality improvement. Technical assistance ensures that the resources remain healthy and productive.

Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program

The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, Tribal, or local governments and nongovernmental

organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the conservation easement.

To qualify, farm and ranch land must be part of a pending offer from a farm and ranch land protection program of a State, tribal, or local government or nongovernmental organizational farm land protection program; be privately owned; have a conservation plan for highly erodible land; be large enough to sustain agricultural production; be accessible to markets for what the land produces; have adequate infrastructure and agricultural support services; and have surrounding parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production. Depending on funding availability, proposals must be submitted by the eligible entities to the appropriate NRCS State Office during the application period.

Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts.

The NRCS goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to enable eligible participants to protect, restore, develop, or enhance habitat for upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish, and other types of wildlife in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The purpose of the program is to develop high-quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of local, State, and national significance. WHIP agreements between NRCS and participants generally last 5 to 10 years.

WHIP has proven to be a highly effective and widely accepted program. By encouraging wildlife habitat projects on all non-Federal lands and aquatic areas, WHIP provides assistance to conservation-minded landowners who are unable to meet the specific eligibility requirements of other USDA conservation programs.

Soil Survey Program

Led by NRCS, the National Cooperative Soil Survey Program (NCSS) is a partnership of Federal land management agencies, State agricultural experiment stations, and State and local units of government that provide soil survey information necessary for understanding, managing, conserving, and sustaining the Nation's limited soil resources. NRCS leads the federal part of the NCSS partnership.

Soil surveys provide an orderly, on-the-ground, scientific inventory of soil resources that includes maps showing the locations and extent of soils, data about the physical and chemical properties of those soils, and information derived from that data about potentialities and problems of use on each kind of soil. The inventory information is provided in sufficient detail to meet all reasonable needs of farmers, agricultural technicians, community planners, engineers, and scientists in planning and transferring the findings of research and experience to specific land areas. Soil surveys provide the basic information needed to manage soil sustainability. They also provide information needed to protect water quality, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

Soil surveys provide a basis for predicting the behavior of a soil under alternative uses, its potential erosion hazard, its potential for ground water contamination, and its suitability and productivity for cultivated crops, trees, and grasses. Such surveys are important to individuals such as planners, engineers, zoning commissions, tax commissioners, homeowners, developers, and agricultural producers. Soil surveys also provide a basis for predicting the effect of global climate change on worldwide agricultural production and other land-dependent processes. The NRCS Soil Survey Division, through its World Soil Resources Staff, helps gather and interpret soil information for global use.

NRCS provides soil surveys for the privately owned non-Federal lands of the Nation and, through its National Soil Survey Center (NSSC), provides scientific expertise to enable the NSSC to develop and maintain a uniform system for mapping and assessing soil resources so that soil information from different locations can be shared, regardless of which agency collects it. NRCS provides most of the training in soil surveys to Federal agencies and assists other Federal agencies with their soil inventories on a reimbursable basis.

Resource Conservation and Development Program

The purpose of the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program is to accelerate the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources; improve the general level of economic activity; and enhance the environment and standard of living in designated RC&D areas. The program improves the capability of States, tribes, local units of government, and local nonprofit organizations in rural areas to plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation and development. The program also establishes or improves coordination systems in rural areas.

Current program objectives focus on improvement of quality of life through natural resources conservation and community development—leading to sustainable communities, prudent use (development), and the management and conservation of natural resources. RC&D areas are locally sponsored areas designated by the Secretary of Agriculture for RC&D technical and financial assistance program funds. A map of RC&D areas can be accessed online (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/rcd/photos/m8594.gif>).

Agricultural Management Assistance

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides cost-share payments to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion

control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices such as soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

NRCS has leadership for the AMA's conservation provisions. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is responsible for an organic certification cost-share program, and the Risk Management Agency (RMA) is responsible for mitigation of financial risk through an insurance cost-share program.

AMA is available in 15 States in which participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

A conservation plan is required for the area covered in the application and becomes the basis for developing the AMA contract. NRCS works with the landowner to develop a conservation plan. Landowners must agree to maintain cost-shared practices for the life of the practice. Contracts are for 3 to 10 years.

The NRCS State conservationist, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, determines eligible structural and/or vegetative conservation practices using a locally led process. The Federal cost share is 75 percent of the cost of an eligible practice. Participants will be paid upon certification of completion of the approved practice.

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (P.L. 83-566), of August 4, 1954, as amended, authorizes NRCS to cooperate with States and local agencies to carry out works of improvement for soil conservation and for other purposes such as flood prevention; conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; and conservation and proper utilization of land.

NRCS implements the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act through three programs: Watershed Surveys and Planning; Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations; and Watershed Rehabilitation.

Plant Materials Centers

The purpose of this program is to provide native plants that can help solve natural resource problems. Beneficial uses for which plant material may be developed include biomass production, carbon sequestration, erosion reduction, wetland restoration, water quality improvement, stream bank and riparian area protection, coastal dune stabilization, and other special conservation treatment needs.

Scientists at the Plant Materials Centers seek out plants that show promise for meeting an identified conservation need and test their performance. After species are proven effective, they are released to the private sector for commercial production. The work at the 26 centers is carried out cooperatively with State and Federal agencies, commercial businesses, and seed and nursery associations.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

The purpose of the Emergency Watershed Protection program is to undertake emergency measures, including the purchase of flood plain easements, for runoff retardation and soil erosion prevention to safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion on any watershed whenever fire, flood, or any other natural occurrence is causing or has caused a sudden impairment of the watershed.

Tribal Conservation Districts

NRCS has assisted in the establishment of 26 Tribal Conservation Districts (with more under development) that are providing the essential local leadership to effectively target conservation planning and conservation program assistance in tribal country. The agency provides all American Indian and Alaska Native governments with information on conservation district options and processes for their consideration.

If a Tribal Conservation District is formed, NRCS will work with the newly formed district and the Indian tribe or Alaska Native corporation to establish a cooperative working agreement between the Indian tribe, the Tribal Conservation District, and the NRCS State conservationist. The cooperative working agreement provides an opportunity to establish the tribal government's role and to resolve any issues between the tribe and NRCS as well as to establish levels of service from NRCS.

A Tribal Conservation District provides guidance to NRCS for prioritizing program assistance. As a locally led initiative, a Tribal Conservation District may wish to interact with the USDA local advisory committee that establishes local conservation priorities for USDA programs.

Additional Information

Whom to Contact: Most States with federally recognized tribal reservations within their exterior boundaries have a State and/or local American Indian Outreach Coordinator. These individuals are available to help tribes become familiar with and access NRCS programs and services. The Outreach Coordinators are in contact with tribes in their areas to provide assistance and to evaluate their agencies' ability to better serve tribal needs. The Outreach Coordinators can be reached at the State NRCS offices or in a local office in the State in which your tribal headquarters is located.

Additional information on any of these programs is also available on the NRCS Web site (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>) or from your local NRCS office, State NRCS office, Tribal or Local Conservation District, Conservation District office, or nearest USDA Service Center. USDA

offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings (look for “U.S. Department of Agriculture”).

Administering Agency: Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-2847; fax: 202-690-0639; Web site: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>).

The Forest Service

USDA’s Forest Service is a Federal agency that manages public lands in national forests and grasslands. In addition, the Forest Service—the largest forestry research organization in the world—provides technical and financial assistance to State, tribal, and private forestry agencies. The Forest Service was established in 1905 to provide quality water and timber for the Nation’s benefit.

The Forest Service motto, “Caring for the Land and Serving People,” captures the spirit of its mission, which is accomplished through five main activities:

- Protection and management of natural resources on National Forest System lands.
- Research on all aspects of forestry, rangeland management, and forest resource utilization.
- Cooperation with State, tribal, and local governments, forest industries, and private landowners to help protect and manage non-Federal forest and associated range and watershed lands and to improve forest and natural resource conditions.
- International assistance in formulating policy and coordinating U.S. support for the protection and sound management of the world’s forest resources.
- Achieving and supporting an effective workforce that reflects the full range of diversity of the American people.

Forest Service Programs

The Forest Service is a leader in the conservation and wise use of the Nation’s forests and rangelands. In addition to assisting with numerous tribal forest lands, it is also the steward of 155 national forests comprising 193 million acres in 44 States. The agency consults and works directly with sovereign Indian Nations throughout the United States.

The Forest Service works with tribal governments, tribal communities, and Indian farmers and ranchers operating on tribal trust lands primarily through its State and Private Cooperative Forestry Programs, including the Forest Stewardship Program and its small diameter utilization and wood-to-energy initiatives.

In 2004, the Forest Service created an Office of Tribal Relations. This office was established to facilitate consistency and effectiveness in Forest Service program delivery and to institutionalize long-term collaborative relationships with tribal governments through policy and direction.

The Office of Tribal Relations' purpose is to:

- Implement new and existing policy and direction regarding tribes.
- Ensure that Forest Service programs affecting tribes are based on respectful, supportive government-to-government relationships that strengthen external and internal coordination and communication about tribal concerns.
- Prepare policy and direction outlining the legal requirements of government-to-government relationships and to clarify the agency's trust responsibilities and authorities when working with tribes.
- Emphasize education and train agency employees to work effectively with tribal governments.
- Facilitate and improve implementation of the Forest Service's American Indian and Alaska Native policies (e.g., by updating the *Forest Service National Resource Book on American Indian and Alaska Native Relations*).
- Manage national forest system lands and resources with adjacent Indian tribes. The Forest Service honors American Indian water rights and reserved rights to hunt, fish, gather, and graze on present-day national forests through consultation and agreements with the affected Indian tribes. The agency is engaged in consultation with Indian tribes to accommodate traditional cultural sites on public lands and to facilitate research, technology transfer, and other assistance in this regard.

In addition to assisting State forestry organizations and private landowners, the Forest Service assists American Indian communities in applying worthy forest practices. The Forest Service also provides technical assistance and performs research to find better ways to manage and use the Nation's resources. The agency prides itself on its work with indigenous communities in other parts of the world through its Office of International Programs.

An important USDA Forest Service resource is the *Forest Service National Resource Book on American Indians and Alaska Native Relations*. This national resource book was developed to improve the implementation of specific policies regarding American Indians and Alaska Natives. Copies of the book may be requested from the Forest Service's Office of Tribal Relations, and an updated edition will soon be accessible online on the Forest Service's Office of Tribal Relations Web site (<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/tribalrelations>).

Tribal Forest Protection Act

The Tribal Forest Protection Act, Pub. L. 108-278 (2004), authorizes the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to enter into agreements and contracts with tribal governments to carry out projects on Federal lands to protect adjacent Indian forest land, rangeland, or communities. Indian tribes submit project proposals to the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for projects on Forest Service or BLM land bordering or adjacent to tribal land.

The projects are intended to address fire, disease, and other threats to Indian forest or rangeland as well as situations in which the FS or BLM land is in need of restoration. The Secretaries are to respond to tribal project proposals within 120 days from the date a project proposal is submitted. The decision on whether to authorize tribes' project proposals is wholly at the discretion of the Secretaries.

Primary Forest Service Programs

For information on these programs, contact your regional Forest Service office (see table below). The point of contact is your regional tribal program manager. All Forest Service offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: Look for "U.S. Department of Agriculture."

USDA Forest Service Regional Offices

Region	Telephone	Fax	Address
Region 01 (MT, nID, ND, nwSD)	406-329-3348	406-329-3132	U.S. Forest Service Northern Region Federal Building 200 E. Broadway Missoula, MT 59802
Region 02 (CO, KS, NE, SD, eWY)	303-275-5760	303-275-5754	U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region 740 Simms Street Golden, CO 80401-4720
Region 03 (AZ, NM)	505-842-3424	505-842-3165	U.S. Forest Service Southwestern Region 333 Broadway SE Albuquerque, NM 87102
Region 04 (ID, NV, UT, wWY)	801-625-5820	801-625-5716	U.S. Forest Service Intermountain Region 324 25th Street Ogden, UT 84401
Region 05 (CA, HW, US affiliated Pacific Is)	707-562-8919	707-562-9052	U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region 1323 Club Drive Vallejo, CA 94592
Region 06 (OR, WA)	503-808-2603	503-808-2467	U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region 333 SW First Street P.O. Box 3623

			Portland, OR 97204
Region 08 (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, PR, SC, TN, TX, VI, VA)	318-473-7177	318-473-7180	U.S. Forest Service Southern Region Kisatchie National Forest 2500 Shreveport Pineville, LA 71360-2009
Region 09 (CT, DE, IL, IN, IA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WV, WI)	414-297-3777	414-944-3966	U.S. Forest Service Eastern Region 626 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 800 Milwaukee, WI 53202
Region 10 (AK)	907-586-7089	907-586-7852	U.S. Forest Service Alaska Region 709 W. 9 th Street P.O. Box 21628 Juneau, AK 99802-1628
Washington Office	202-205-1514	202-205-1773	U.S. Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations USDA 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20250-0003

Range Management Program

Three types of grazing permits are issued by the Forest Service. Temporary Grazing Permits serve for short periods to handle special circumstances, Livestock Use Permits authorize incidental use but not commercial livestock production on national forest lands, and Term Grazing Permits—common throughout the West—apply for up to 10 years. For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Range Management, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0003 (telephone: 202-205-0893; fax: 202-205-1096; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us>).

Special Land Use Program

A special use permit or other appropriate authorization allows occupancy and use of National Forest System lands for specific purposes and under specific conditions. Participants may use lands for pastures, fences, roads and trails, buildings, water developments, resorts, and commercial enterprises.

Persons proposing use on lands within a national forest or national grassland should contact the local Forest Service office responsible for the affected lands to identify potential constraints and consider the proposal in light of land management plans so that the Forest Service can schedule application processing. Prospective participants apply by bid, in response to a prospectus, or by letter to the district ranger or forest supervisor with jurisdiction over the affected land.

The district ranger or forest supervisor may request additional information before approving or denying an application, but will process the application in a timely fashion. The approving official conveys no privileges until he or she has issued a special use permit.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Lands Management, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0003 (telephone: 202-205-1248; fax: 202-205-1243; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us>).

Timber Sale Program

Available for sale are national forest timber products such as logs for lumber and plywood, wood fiber for paper, fuel wood, posts, poles, and Christmas trees. The local district ranger handles these transactions.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service Office or the USDA Forest Service, Forest Management, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0003 (telephone: 202-205-0893; fax: 202-205-1045; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us>).

Biomass

Forest biomass products are nonmerchantable materials or precommercial thinnings that are by-products of treatments. These products can be trees, wood, brush, thinnings, chips, or slash removed from the forest to reduce hazardous fuels or to reduce disease or insect infestation and restore forest health. Biomass products can be used for electric energy, useful heat, transportation fuels, and other commercial purposes.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Forest Management, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0003 (telephone: 970-295-5947; fax: 970-295-5927; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us>).

Forest Health Protection

This program provides technical and financial assistance to tribes for minimizing the spread of established invasive species and lessening the damage caused by native insects and diseases on tribal lands. The program protects and improves America's forests by using cutting-edge technology to rapidly respond to forest health threats.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0003 (telephone: 703-605-5340; fax: 703-605-5353; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us>).

Rural Community Fire Protection Program

Rural areas and communities with populations under 10,000 receive cost-sharing for organizing, training, and equipping rural firefighting forces. Unprotected or poorly protected communities

receive priority. Federal excess property is available to rural communities for firefighting, though it may need modification or upgrading.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0003 (telephone: 202-205-1054; fax: 202-690-5792; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us>).

Forestry Incentives Program

Private non-industrial forest land owners, including Indian tribes, receive cost-sharing for tree planting and timber stand improvement. To qualify, a person must own land that is:

- Of no more than 5,000 acres;
- Suitable for forestation and timber stand improvement, and
- Capable of producing industrial wood crops that meet minimum productivity standards.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Forest Management, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mailstop 1103, Washington, DC 20250-1103 (telephone: 202-205-0893; fax: 202-205-1045; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us>).

Forestry Stewardship Program

The Forest Stewardship Program, implemented through the State forestry agencies, helps private forest landowners and Indian tribes and individuals develop plans for managing their forests. The Forest Service offers direct assistance to tribes to help protect and improve soil, water, range, aesthetics, recreation, timber, and fish and wildlife resources.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Cooperative Forestry, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20078-5500 (telephone: 202-205-1389; fax: 202-205-1271; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop>).

Forestland Enhancement Program

Providing technical, educational, and cost-share assistance to eligible private nonindustrial landowners, including Indian tribes, this program promotes improvement and protection of soil and water, fish and wildlife, aesthetics, and forest recreation. To qualify, a person must privately own a tract of land with no more than 1,000 acres of eligible forest land (or 5,000 acres with a waiver from the State forester).

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Cooperative Forestry, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20078-5500 (telephone: 202-205-1389; fax: 202-205-1271; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop>).

Economic Action Program

The Economic Action Program (EAP) assists rural communities in building skills, networks, and strategies to address social, environmental, and economic changes. EAP helps communities and businesses to find new and expanded business opportunities based on forest resources and to develop new markets for natural-resource-based goods and services. The program also funds a grant program that provides financial and technical assistance to tribal forest-dependent communities for heritage tourism and historic preservation.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Cooperative Forestry, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20078-5500 (telephone: 202-205-1389; fax: 202-205-1271; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop>).

Urban and Community Forestry

The Urban and Community Forestry program enhances the livability of towns, communities, and cities by providing technical and financial assistance to plan, protect, establish, and manage trees, forests, and related resources. The program also aims to restore and sustain the health and quality of the natural and human environments in urban areas and to increase public awareness of, and participation in, activities to improve the natural, social, and economic environments of the Nation's urban and community areas.

For additional information, contact your local Forest Service office or the USDA Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0003 (telephone: 202-205-1389; fax: 202-205-1271; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/ucf>).

Job Corps Program

In partnership with the Department of Labor, the Forest Service Job Corps Program operates 18 Job Corps Centers on national forest lands, and some of them offer natural-resource-related training and work. The Job Corps is America's oldest, largest, and most comprehensive residential training program for at-risk youth ages 16 to 25, preparing millions of young men and women for meaningful work and assisting them in finding jobs. All programs are self-paced to best meet the needs of each student.

To learn more about the Forest Service Job Corps Program, call the toll-free Job Corps Hotline at 1-800-733 JOBS (5627) or access the Department of Labor's Job Corps Web page at <http://jobcorps.doleta.gov>. You can also visit the nearest State employment service and ask for a Job Corps counselor, or call or write the USDA Forest Service, Youth Programs, Rosslyn Plaza Building E, 1621 North Kent Street, Arlington, VA 22209 (telephone: 703-605-4829).

Senior Community Service Employment Program

The Senior Community Service Employment Program allows senior citizens to share their time, talent, and experience through the Forest Service. The threefold purpose is to provide:

- Part-time employment and supplementary income for elderly, low-income people.
- Training that enhances these individuals' opportunity for transition into the regular labor market.
- An opportunity for senior citizens to participate in community service work.

Participants must be at least 55 years old and meet the low-income eligibility guidelines established by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor. Enrollment priority is given to persons over age 60 and to qualified spouses of veterans.

For additional information, access the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration Web page (<http://www.doleta.gov>) or contact your local One-stop Center through the Toll-Free Help Line at 1-877-US-2JOBS (1-877-872-5627) or TTY at 1-877-889-5627. Information is also available from the USDA Forest Service, Senior Programs, Rosslyn Plaza Building E, 1621 North Kent Street, Arlington, VA 22209 (telephone: 703-605-4829).

Youth Conservation Corps

A summer employment program for young men and women ages 15 to 18, the Youth Conservation Corps seeks to accomplish needed conservation work on public lands, provide gainful employment, and develop an understanding and appreciation of the Nation's natural environment and heritage. Projects are located on lands administered by the Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service.

Application forms are available on the Forest Service Web site (<http://www.fs.fed.us/people/volunteer/ycc.htm>). Information is also available from the USDA Forest Service, Youth Programs, Rosslyn Plaza Building E, 1621 North Kent Street, Arlington, VA 22209 (telephone: 703-605-4829; fax: 703-605-4832; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/people/volunteer>).

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: For additional information on Forest Service programs, contact your regional Forest Service office. The point of contact is your regional tribal program manager. All regional Forest Service offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: Look for "U.S. Department of Agriculture." These offices are also listed on the Forest Service Web site (<http://www.fs.fed.us>); select "National Offices and Programs" and "9 regions."

Administering Agency: USDA Forest Service, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0003; telephone: 202-205-8333; fax: 202-358-4063; e-mail: Webmaster@fs.fed.us; Web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us>).

3. Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

USDA's Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (FFAS) mission area helps to keep America's farmers and ranchers in business as they face the uncertainties of weather and markets. This mission area delivers commodity, credit, conservation, disaster, and emergency assistance programs that help improve the stability and strength of the Nation's agricultural economy.

FFAS also delivers programs and services that support USDA strategic goals to enhance the international competitiveness of American agricultural producers, including American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and their members. The mission area conducts its activities in support of the following five key objectives:

- Expand and maintain international export opportunities.
- Support international economic development and trade capacity building.
- Expand alternative markets for agricultural products and activities.
- Provide risk management and financial tools to farmers and ranchers.
- Protect and enhance the Nation's natural resource base and environment.

Farm loans and income support programs are key components of USDA's efforts to provide America's farmers and ranchers with an economic safety net to help them maintain their operations during difficult times. These programs improve producer access to capital and mitigate market losses, including those resulting from disasters. They also contribute to the success of farms and ranches, a market-based agricultural sector, and thriving agricultural communities.

The work of the FFAS mission area is carried out by its three agencies, the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Risk Management Agency (RMA), and the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) is the source of funding for most of the conservation and commodity programs administered by FSA and of the export programs administered by FAS.

Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) assists American agricultural producers in stabilizing their farm income, helps farmers conserve land and water resources, provides credit to existing, beginning, or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain credit elsewhere, and helps farm operations recover from the effects of disasters. The vision statement for the agency is relevant to all agricultural producers, including American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, their members, and others who certify they are Native American: "A customer-driven agency with a diverse and multi-talented work force, dedicated to achieving an economically and environmentally sound future for American Agriculture."

Though the FSA name has changed over the years, the agency's relationship with farmers goes back to the 1930s. FSA was set up when the Department was reorganized in 1994, incorporating programs from several agencies, including the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (subsequently moved to the Risk Management Agency), and the Farmers Home Administration.

In the 1930s, Congress set up a unique system under which Federal farm programs were to be administered locally. (FSA Farm Loan Programs, however, are not administered at the local level.) Agricultural producers eligible to participate in FSA farm programs elect a three- to five-person county committee, which reviews county office operations and makes decisions on how to apply farm programs. This grassroots approach gives all agricultural producers a much-needed say in how Federal actions affect their communities and their individual operations. After more than 60 years, it remains a cornerstone of FSA's efforts to preserve and promote American agriculture.

FSA is committed to providing timely program information to the farmers and ranchers among American Indian and Alaska Native tribes so they can make the best possible decisions for their businesses.

Farm Service Agency Outreach

Since 1996, the FSA Outreach staff has created the following programs:

- Native American Outreach
- Agricultural Mediation Program
- African American Outreach
- Asian and Pacific Islander Outreach
- Hispanic Outreach
- Resource Conservation and Development Outreach
- Women Outreach

Through these programs, the FSA Outreach staff:

- Assists limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in improving their income through better farm management and financial planning.
- Assures that underserved, limited-resource, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers participate fully in FSA State and county committee elections.
- Works with community-based organizations (including churches and social groups; 1862, 1890, and 1994 land-grant colleges and universities; Hispanic-serving institutions; and tribally controlled colleges) to provide technical assistance and training to limited-resource and socially disadvantaged family farmers.
- Partners with community-based ranchers and organizations to enhance program delivery to underserved communities.

For additional information, contact Mike Hill, Director, Outreach Staff, FSA, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-690-1299; e-mail: Mike.Hill@wdc.usda.gov) or visit the FSA Outreach Web site (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/outreach>).

County Office Committee Elections

Farmers and ranchers elect representatives from their community to serve on their local County Office Committees (COCs), which work with local FSA staff to administer programs, provide policy direction, and guide eligibility requirements for programs in their own communities. COCs provide important insight into how farm programs affect local communities.

COCs may also include minority advisors. These advisors highlight special concerns and represent additional views on program implementation and administration, ensuring that all producers have a voice in the COC system. All agricultural producers who participate in or cooperate with programs administered within the jurisdiction of a COC are eligible to be nominated and to vote. It is imperative that COCs reflect the diversity of farming communities they represent.

Additional information is available on the FSA Web site (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>).

FSA Program Tools

The primary mission of FSA is to help farmers and ranchers secure benefits from programs such as farm loans, commodity price support, disaster relief, conservation, food aid, and other available resources. FSA is dedicated to improving the economic stability of the Nation's agricultural sector and to ensuring an optimal quality of life for future generations.

Approximately 2,500 State, district, and county FSA offices are at the forefront of the agency's efforts and remain the primary contact for program participation. The agency encourages all Native American and Alaska Native community members and individuals to speak with the staff at their local FSA offices concerning ways in which the agency can be of service. The FSA Web site (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>) also provides information about FSA programs and services, including the location of local FSA Service Centers.

FSA seeks to build lasting relationships with Native Americans and Alaska Native people and communities and to work in partnership with them to solve problems and abolish barriers. The agency is committed to informing all farmers and ranchers about FSA programs and services and to aiding participation in FSA programs on the part of the all eligible persons, including limited-resource farmers and those who are socially disadvantaged or members of racial minority groups.

Primary FSA-Administered Programs

FSA administers a number of programs, most of which utilize funds of the CCC. Some of these programs are only authorized by Congress from time to time, and all programs are subject to regulations as well as involving, often, program contracts.

For information on any of these programs, contact your local or State FSA office or visit the FSA Web site (www.fsa.usda.gov). USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: Look for "U.S. Department of Agriculture." FSA publishes factsheets that summarize the terms of the present year's program for various commodities as well as on topics such as loan programs and conservations. Fact sheets are available online on the FSA Web site (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>).

Farm Programs

American Indian Livestock Feed Program

When funded, this program can provide financial assistance to livestock producers who purchased feed for livestock that occupied tribal-governed land during a natural disaster. The tribe governing the land used for livestock production will determine if the livestock producer meets the eligibility requirements.

Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary land retirement program available to agricultural producers to help safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, the CCC, through FSA, provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. The contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a derivative program of CRP, is a voluntary land-retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water. The program involves a partnership among producers; tribal, State, and Federal governments; and, in some cases, private groups.

Crop Disaster Program

From time to time, CCC, when authorized by Congress, provides crop-loss disaster assistance for producers (with some exceptions) who have suffered losses caused by damaging weather and related conditions.

Dairy Indemnity Payment Program

The Dairy Indemnity Payment Program pays dairy producers when a public regulatory agency directs them to remove their raw milk from the commercial market because it has been contaminated by pesticides, nuclear radiation or fallout, or toxic substances and chemical residues other than pesticides. Payments are made to manufacturers of dairy products only for products removed from the market because of pesticide contamination.

Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program

The Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program (DCP) provides income support to producers of eligible commodities according to historically based acreage and yields rather than the current production choices of the farmer. DCP was authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the 2002 Farm Bill) for farms enrolled for the 2002 through 2007 crop years for barley, corn, grain sorghum (including dual-purpose varieties), oats, canola, crambe, flax seed, mustard seed, rapeseed, safflower, sesame seed and sunflower seed (including oil and non-oil varieties), peanuts, rice (excluding wild rice), soybeans, upland cotton, and wheat.

Emergency Conservation Program

This program provides funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by wind erosion, floods, hurricanes, or other natural disasters and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures during periods of severe drought. The natural disaster must create new conservation problems that, if not treated, would impair or endanger the land; would materially affect the productive capacity of the land; would represent unusual damage which, except for wind erosion, is not the type likely to recur frequently in the same area; and would be so costly to repair that Federal assistance is required to return the land to productive agricultural use.

Farmable Wetlands Program

The Farmable Wetlands Program is a voluntary program intended to restore up to 1 million acres of farmable wetlands and associated buffers by improving those lands' hydrology and vegetation under CRP.

Farm Storage Facility Loan Program

CCC, through FSA, may make loans to producers to build or upgrade on-farm storage and handling facilities for rice, soybeans, dry peas, lentils, small chickpeas, peanuts, sunflower seeds, canola, rapeseed, safflower, flaxseed, mustard seed, and other oilseeds. Corn, grain sorghum, oats, wheat, and barley are also eligible, subject to program requirements.

Grassland Reserve Program

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program for landowners to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service,

FSA, and Forest Service implement GRP to conserve vulnerable grasslands from conversion to cropland or other uses and to conserve valuable grasslands by helping maintain viable ranching operations.

Hard White Wheat Incentive Program

When available, this program serves to increase the supply of hard white wheat available for domestic milling and export.

Livestock Assistance Program

When available, this assistance provides payments to eligible livestock producers for grazing losses that occurred in an eligible year if a producer's grazing land is in a county that was declared a primary disaster area under a Presidential or Secretarial declaration. Producers in contiguous counties are not eligible.

Milk Income Loss Contract Program

The Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Program financially compensates dairy producers when domestic milk prices fall below a specified level. MILC payments are made monthly when the milk price falls below the established price per hundredweight.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to eligible producers affected by drought, flood, hurricane, or other natural disasters. NAP covers noninsurable crop losses and planting prevented by disasters for losses on crops for which Federal catastrophic crop insurance is not available. Landowners, tenants, or sharecroppers who share the risk of producing an eligible crop are eligible.

Eligible crops include commercial crops and other agricultural commodities produced for food, including livestock feed or fiber for which the catastrophic level of crop insurance is unavailable. Also eligible for NAP coverage are controlled-environment crops (mushrooms and floriculture), specialty crops (honey and maple sap), and value loss crops (aquaculture, Christmas trees, ginseng, ornamental nursery, and turfgrass sod).

Nonrecourse Marketing Assistance Loan and Loan Deficiency Payment Programs

Nonrecourse Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) provide producers interim financing at harvest time to meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. MALs allow producers to store production at harvest and facilitate more orderly marketing of commodities throughout the year. MALs for covered commodities are nonrecourse because the commodity is pledged as loan collateral, and producers have the option of delivering the pledged collateral to the CCC at maturity in full satisfaction of the loan obligation.

A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but who agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP). The LDP rate equals the amount by which the applicable loan rate where the commodity is stored exceeds the alternative loan repayment rate for the respective commodity.

Recourse Seed Cotton Loans

CCC makes recourse seed cotton loans available through March 31 of the year following the calendar year in which the cotton crop is normally harvested. Seed cotton pledged as collateral for a loan must be tendered to CCC by an eligible producer and must be in existence and in good condition at the time of disbursement of loan proceeds, in addition to other requirements.

The seed cotton loan principal, interest, and charges must be repaid before the cotton is pledged for a non-recourse loan or before a loan deficiency payment can be approved. Seed cotton loans mature on demand by CCC, but no later than May 31 following the calendar year in which such crop is normally harvested.

Sugar Loan Program and Sugar Marketing Allotments

The Sugar Loan Program provides non-recourse loans to processors of domestically grown sugarcane and sugar beets to stabilize America's sugar industry. CCC establishes marketing allotments for sugar from domestically produced sugar beets and sugarcane.

Allotments are assigned based on estimates of sugar consumption, stocks, production, and imports for a crop year, with the intent that the total allotment quantity minimizes forfeitures of sugar to CCC under the sugar loan program.

Sugar Storage Facility Loan Program

CCC may make loans to processors of domestically produced sugarcane and sugar beets for the construction or upgrading of storage and handling facilities for raw sugars and refined sugars. Loans may be made only for the purchase and installation of eligible storage facilities or permanently affixed handling equipment or for the remodeling of existing facilities.

Tobacco Transition Payment Program

CCC provides payments over a 10-year period to former quota holders and producers of quota tobacco to help them make the transition from the federally regulated tobacco marketing quota and price support loan programs. Eligible tobacco quota holders and producers can receive payments under this program in 10 installments in each of the 2005 through 2014 fiscal years.

New contract listings for FY 2006 were posted on May 1, 2006. Additional information can be found on the FSA Web site (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/tobacco>).

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers (TAA) provides technical assistance and cash benefits to eligible producers of raw agricultural commodities, such as fish or blueberries, after an associated industry group petitions the Secretary for assistance. Producers may be eligible for TAA assistance if the national average price in the most recent marketing year for a commodity is less than 80 percent of the national average price in the preceding 5 marketing years as a result of increased imports of that commodity. The program is authorized through 2007.

Tree Assistance Program

The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) provides assistance to eligible producers of trees or tree products to replant trees, bushes, and vines grown for the production of an annual crop but lost due to a natural disaster. The tree losses must meet the criteria in TAP regulations. CCC provides funding when authorized.

Youth Loans

FSA makes loans to individual rural youths between the ages of 10 and 20 years to establish and operate income-producing projects of modest size in connection with their participation in 4-H clubs, FFA, and similar organizations. Each project must be part of an organized and supervised program of work. The project must be planned and operated with the help of the organization adviser, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience.

Farm Loan Programs

Agricultural Mediation Program

The Agricultural Mediation Program helps agricultural producers, their lenders, and other persons directly affected by the actions of USDA to resolve disputes. A trained, impartial mediator reviews conflicts, identifies options, and assists in settling disputes between participants in many different USDA program areas. These include farm loans, farm and conservation programs, wetland determinations, rural water loan programs, grazing on national forest system lands, pesticides, rural housing loans, rural business loans, crop insurance, and other issues as the Secretary may subsequently consider appropriate.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Loans

FSA provides direct and guaranteed loans to beginning farmers and ranchers who are unable to obtain financing from commercial credit sources. A beginning farmer or rancher is an individual or entity who (1) has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years, (2) meets the loan eligibility requirements of the program to which he or she is applying, (3) substantially participates in the operation, and (4) for farm ownership loan purposes, does not own a farm greater than 30 percent of the average-size farm in the county.

Boll Weevil Eradication Loan Program

The Boll Weevil Eradication Loan Program provides low-interest loans to nonprofit organizations that work collaboratively with State agencies, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the National Cotton Council to eradicate the boll weevil. The program objective is to assist producers and State government agencies in the eradication of boll weevils from cotton-producing areas.

Debt for Nature Program

The Debt for Nature Program, also known as the Debt Cancellation Conservation Contract Program, is available to persons with FSA loans secured by real estate who may qualify for cancellation of a portion of their FSA indebtedness in exchange for a conservation contract with a term of 50, 30, or 10 years. A conservation contract is a voluntary legal agreement that restricts the type and amount of development that may occur on part of a landowner's property. Contracts may be established on marginal cropland and other environmentally sensitive lands for conservation, recreation, and wildlife purposes.

Direct Farm Ownership Loan Program

FSA direct farm ownership loans help recipients to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings and other fixtures, and promote soil and water conservation. To qualify for a direct farm ownership loan, the applicant must be unable to obtain commercial credit, show sufficient repayment ability, pledge enough collateral to fully secure the loan, and meet all eligibility requirements.

Direct Operating Loan Program

FSA direct farm operating loans help recipients to purchase items such as livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, and insurance and to cover other operating expenses. These loans can also serve to pay for minor improvements to buildings, costs associated with land and water development, family subsistence, and refinancing debts under certain conditions.

Down Payment Farm Ownership Loans

Down Payment Farm Ownership loans were developed to help beginning farmers and ranchers purchase a farm or ranch. These loans provide a way for retiring farmers to transfer their land to a future generation of farmers and ranchers.

Emergency Loan Program

FSA provides emergency loans to help producers recover from production and physical losses due to drought, flooding, other natural disasters, or quarantine. Emergency loans may be made to farmers and ranchers who own or operate land located in a county declared by the President as a disaster area or designated by the Secretary of Agriculture as a disaster area or quarantine area.

(For physical losses only, the FSA Administrator may authorize emergency loan assistance. Tribal chair persons, or leaders, may request that their federally recognized reservation, or portion thereof, be designated a Secretarial disaster area.) Emergency loan funds may be used to restore or replace essential property, pay all or part of production costs associated with the disaster year, pay essential family living expenses, reorganize the farming operation, and refinance certain debts.

Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loan Program

These FSA-guaranteed loans provide lenders (banks, Farm Credit System institutions, credit unions) with a guarantee of up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Farmers and ranchers apply to an agricultural lender, which then arranges for the guarantee.

The FSA guarantee permits lenders to make agricultural credit available to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. A percentage of guaranteed loan funds are targeted to beginning farmers and ranchers and socially disadvantaged applicants. These loans may be made to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings and other fixtures, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation, or refinance debt.

Guaranteed Operating Loan Program

These FSA-guaranteed loans provide lenders (banks, Farm Credit System institutions, or credit unions) with a guarantee of up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Farmers and ranchers apply to an agricultural lender, which then arranges for the guarantee.

The FSA guarantee permits lenders to make agricultural credit available to farmers who do not meet the lender's normal underwriting criteria. A percentage of guaranteed loan funds are targeted to beginning farmers and ranchers and to socially disadvantaged applicants.

Guaranteed Operating Loans may be made to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, repairs, and insurance and to cover other operating expenses. Guaranteed Operating Loans also can be used to pay for minor improvements to buildings, costs associated with land and water development, family living expenses, and the refinancing of debts under certain conditions.

Homestead Protection Program

If FSA has exhausted all loan servicing options and forecloses on a property as required by law, then this program allows the borrower to lease, for up to 5 years, property containing the borrower's primary residence, as well as up to 10 adjoining acres of land. The lease may contain an option to purchase.

Indian Tribal Land Acquisition Program

These acquisition loans enable Indian tribes to purchase privately held lands that lie within their reservations. Loan funds may pay for expenses incidental to the purchase of the land, but not for land development.

Primary Loan Servicing Program

The Primary Loan Servicing Program gives options to borrowers who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to make the scheduled payments on their debt to the U.S. Government. These options may include consolidation, loan rescheduling, deferral, or interest rate reduction. The program allows the delinquent FSA borrower to attain, or maintain, a current loan status while at the same time regaining a solid financial footing for the long term.

Commodity Operations

Domestic and Foreign Food Assistance Program

USDA, through FSA, donates food to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to Federal, tribal, State, and other private and nonprofit agencies in the United States. USDA-contributed food items are used in school lunch programs; summer camps for kids; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; and other organizations, charities, and programs that help needy persons.

In addition, agricultural commodities are donated to foreign or international relief agencies to help feed people around the world. FAS organizes the delivery of the donated food to international development and humanitarian organizations operating in dozens of other countries. Food donations also assist in the FAS Food for Progress program, which helps countries working to transition to market-oriented economies.

Extra Long Staple Cotton Competitiveness Payments

This program provides commodity certificates or cash to domestic users and exporters of extra long staple cotton when certain price conditions exist.

United States Warehouse Act

The United States Warehouse Act (USWA) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to license warehouse operators who store agricultural products. Warehouse operators that apply must meet USDA standards established within the USWA and its regulations. Application is voluntary. Applicants agree to be licensed under the USWA, observe the rules for licensing, and pay associated user fees.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: For additional information on FSA programs, contact your local or State FSA office or visit the FSA Web site (www.fsa.usda.gov). USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: Look for “U.S. Department of Agriculture.”

FSA publishes factsheets that summarize the terms of the present year’s program for various commodities as well as covering topics such as loan programs and conservations. The factsheets are available online on the FSA Web site (<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>).

If you have FSA-specific questions to which you would like an expert to respond, you can submit them online through the “Ask FSA” feature on the FSA Web site (select “Contact Us” and “Ask FSA.”)

Administering Agency: Farm Service Agency, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0506 (Web site: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>). Office of External Affairs—telephone: 202-720-3865; fax: 202-720-4034.

Risk Management Agency

The Risk Management Agency (RMA), created in 1996, helps producers manage their business risks through effective, market-based risk management solutions. RMA’s mission is to promote, support, and regulate sound risk management solutions to preserve and strengthen the economic stability of America’s agricultural producers. As part of this mission, RMA operates and manages the crop insurance programs for the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), founded in 1938.

The agency currently has three divisions: Insurance Services, Product Management, and Compliance. Insurance Services is responsible for program delivery (i.e., managing the contracts with the private insurance companies that sell and service the crop insurance policies), risk management education, and management of underwriting field offices providing local program administration and support. Product Management is responsible for overseeing product analysis, product administration, and actuarial and product design. Compliance evaluates policy and procedures, monitors compliance with program provisions by both producers and the private insurance companies that sell and service policies, and manages the compliance field offices.

On behalf of FCIC, RMA reinsures crop insurance policies sold and serviced by private crop insurance companies. These policies cover losses due to natural causes such as drought, excessive moisture, hail, wind, frost, insects, and disease. RMA, on behalf of FCIC, develops or approves the premium rate, administers premium and expense subsidy, and approves and supports products with respect to the crop insurance policies FCIC reinsures.

In addition, RMA sponsors educational and outreach programs and seminars on the general topic of risk management. The RMA Web site features additional information about RMA, including

agency news, State profiles, and other publications; summaries of insurance sales; information on pilot programs; downloadable crop policies; and agency-sponsored events. The site also features online tools and applications. The most popular applications are the Agent Locator, the Premium Calculator, and the Summary of Business.

Additional Information

Whom to Contact: For additional information, visit the RMA Web site (<http://www.rma.usda.gov>) or contact the Administrator, Risk Management Agency, USDA, Room 6092, South Building, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0801 (telephone: 202-690-2803; fax: 202-690-2818; e-mail: rma.mail@rma.usda.gov).

Regional RMA offices, which serve all 50 States and Puerto Rico, keep in close contact with local producers, grower groups, universities, and government agencies. Information on the locations of these offices, additional RMA information, and crop or livestock protection insurance agent locator information are available from the Risk Management Agency, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0801 or from the RMA Web site (<http://www.rma.usda.gov>).

Administering Agency: Risk Management Agency, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0801 (telephone: 202-690-2803; e-mail: rma.mail@rma.usda.gov; Web site: <http://www.rma.usda.gov>).

Foreign Agricultural Service

With headquarters in Washington, D.C., and offices worldwide, the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) works to improve foreign market access for U.S. products, build new markets, improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace, and provide food aid and technical assistance to foreign countries.

FAS has the primary responsibility for USDA's international activities, including market development, trade agreements and negotiations, and the collection and analysis of statistics and market information. It has a global network of agricultural economists, marketing experts, negotiators, and other specialists that few organizations can equal.

FAS agricultural counselors, attachés, trade officers, and locally employed staff in more than 90 countries support U.S. agricultural interests. The agency's overseas offices serve as the Department's "eyes and ears" for monitoring international issues.

The agency makes trade assistance available to U.S. exporters. The FAS Web site (<http://www.fas.usda.gov>) provides the names of FAS contacts at embassies located throughout the world as well as other helpful information on exporting from the United States.

In addition, FAS administers USDA's export credit guarantee and food aid programs and helps increase income and food availability in developing nations by mobilizing expertise for

agriculturally led economic growth. The agency also works to enhance U.S. agriculture's competitiveness by providing linkages to global resources and international organizations.

Market Access Program

The Market Access Program (MAP) uses funds from CCC to aid in the creation, expansion, and maintenance of foreign markets for U.S. agricultural products. MAP forms a partnership between USDA and nonprofit U.S. agricultural trade associations, U.S. agricultural cooperatives, nonprofit State-regional trade groups, and small U.S. businesses to share the costs of overseas marketing and promotional activities such as consumer promotions, market research, trade shows, and trade servicing. Each year, MAP helps launch and expand sales of U.S. agricultural, fish, and forest products overseas. Among MAP recipients is a Native American organization that supports international marketing.

Foreign Market Development Program

For more than 50 years, the Foreign Market Development Program has fostered a trade promotion partnership between USDA and U.S. agricultural producers and processors represented by nonprofit U.S. commodity or trade associations called Cooperators. Under this partnership, USDA and the Cooperators pool their technical and financial resources to conduct overseas market development activities.

The Cooperator program benefits U.S. farmers, processors, and exporters by assisting their organizations in developing new foreign markets and increasing market share in existing markets. Overseas promotions focus on generic U.S. commodities rather than individual brand-name products and target long-term development.

The Cooperator program has helped support growth in U.S. agricultural exports by enlisting private sector involvement and resources in coordinated efforts to promote U.S. products to foreign importers and consumers around the world.

Emerging Markets Program

The Emerging Markets Program provides funding for technical assistance activities to promote exports of U.S. agricultural commodities and products to emerging markets. The program helps public and private organizations to improve market access by developing, maintaining, or enhancing U.S. exports to low- and middle-income countries that have market-oriented economies and can be viable markets. Funding may be used only to support exports of U.S. agricultural commodities and products through generic activities. Projects that endorse or promote branded products are not eligible for the program.

Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops

The Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops program funds projects that address phytosanitary or other technical barriers that prohibit or threaten the export of U.S. specialty crops. The program covers all cultivated plants and their products produced in the United States except

wheat, feed grains, oilseeds, cotton, rice, peanuts, sugar, and tobacco. Activities include seminars, workshops, study tours, field surveys, pest and disease research, and pre-clearance programs. Any U.S. organization is eligible to participate, including Federal agencies, State agencies, nonprofit trade associations, universities, agricultural cooperatives, and private companies.

Quality Samples Program

The Quality Samples Program helps U.S. agricultural trade organizations provide small samples of their agricultural products to potential importers overseas. Manufacturers overseas can use the samples to assess how U.S. food and fiber products can best meet their production needs. Any U.S. private or government entity with a demonstrated role or interest in exporting U.S. agricultural commodities may apply to participate in the program.

Export Credit Guarantee Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers a short-term export credit guarantee program for commercial financing of U.S. agricultural exports. The Export Credit Guarantee Program (GSM-102) protects U.S. exporters or U.S. financial institutions against risk if the importer's foreign bank fails to make a payment.

Facility Guarantee Program

The Facility Guarantee Program provides payment guarantees to facilitate the financing of goods and services to improve or establish agriculture-related facilities in emerging markets. By supporting such facilities, the Facility Guarantee Program intends to enhance sales of U.S. agricultural commodities and products to emerging markets where the demand for such commodities and products may be constricted because of inadequate storage, processing, or handling capabilities for such products.

Food Aid

FAS helps provide U.S. agricultural commodities to feed millions of hungry people in needy countries. The Food for Progress program, authorized by the Food for Progress Act of 1985, provides for the donation or sale on credit terms of U.S. commodities to developing countries and emerging democracies that have made commitments to introduce or expand free enterprise elements in their agriculture economies. Donations have accounted for all food aid under this program. CCC funds may be used to purchase commodities for use in the program.

The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program provides for donations of U.S. agricultural products, as well as financial and technical assistance, to carry out school feeding programs in foreign countries to improve food security, reduce hunger, and improve education and to carry out maternal and child nutrition programs. The commodities are made available for donation through agreements with private voluntary organizations, cooperatives, intergovernmental organizations, and foreign governments. Commodities may be

donated for direct feeding or for local sale to generate proceeds to support school feeding and nutrition projects.

Food and Agriculture Trade Shows

Each year, FAS sponsors and endorses about 25 food and agricultural trade shows that provide good avenues for entering the best potential markets for U.S. products. FAS works with show organizers to provide a range of marketing and public relations services as well as guidance for new-to-market and new-to-exporting companies. Participation in all shows is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Trade Capacity Building

FAS carries out a broad array of international training, technical assistance, and other collaborative activities with developing and transitional countries to facilitate trade and promote food security. In order to increase the benefits to developing nations participating in global agricultural markets, the agency offers numerous trade-capacity-building programs.

FAS helps nations understand and prepare for meeting World Trade Organization (WTO) requirements. The agency also helps countries focus on the critical role that science and technology can play in raising agricultural productivity in an environmentally sustainable way. This includes assistance in developing appropriate policies and institutions to facilitate research and technology transfer in order to increase incomes, reduce hunger, and improve nutrition.

The agency's Cochran and Borlaug Fellowship Programs bring agriculturists to the United States to expose them to U.S. economic policies, agricultural technologies, business practices and products, biotechnology benefits and safeguards, and other areas. Around the globe, FAS responds to special needs as they arise (e.g., contributing to reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan and helping countries develop agricultural institutions and policies).

Additional Information

Whom to Contact: For information on FAS programs, contact the Public Affairs Division, Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA, AG Box 1004, Washington, DC 20250-1004 (telephone: 202-720-3448). Information on FAS and its programs can also be found on the FAS Web site (<http://www.fas.usda.gov>). (For additional staff contacts, select "Contact Us" on the FAS Web site.)

Administering Agency: Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-3448; Web site: <http://www.fas.usda.gov>).

4. Rural Development

USDA Rural Development is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in all of rural America by providing financial programs to support essential public facilities and services such as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and electric and telephone service. Rural Development promotes economic development by providing loans, loan guarantees, and other assistance to applicants such as banks and community-managed lending pools while also helping communities to participate in community empowerment programs. The mission statement for Rural Development is “to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans.”

All of Rural Development’s funding resources can be used on reservations and for Native American homeowners, homebuyers, and entrepreneurs. Successful partnerships with individuals and tribes are a priority for Rural Development. Rural Development has financed tribal water systems, housing, businesses, health clinics, and other essential community facilities and modern telecommunications, including broadband and electric generation systems. In order to recognize tribal sovereignty and the trust status of tribal lands, it is often necessary to work in cooperation with tribal councils, tribal ordinances, or other agencies such as the Indian Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Rural Development is always working to eliminate substandard housing from rural America by helping rural customers buy, build, or rent decent housing. We also create jobs by funding the growth and creation of businesses and cooperatives. In a typical year, Rural Development programs create or preserve more than 100,000 rural jobs, enable 40,000 to 50,000 rural Americans to buy homes, and help nearly 500,000 low-income rural tenants rent apartments or other housing.

Other Rural Development programs help rural communities build or improve community facilities such as schools, health clinics, and fire stations. Rural Development also has programs that help rural communities build or extend utilities such as water, electricity, and telecommunications services.

Assistance is available in many ways, including direct or guaranteed loans, grants, technical assistance, research, and educational materials. To accomplish its mission, Rural Development often works in partnership with State, local, and tribal governments as well as with rural businesses, cooperatives, and nonprofit agencies.

Rural Development delivers programs in four areas:

- The Utilities Programs address rural America’s need for basic services such as clean running water, sewage and waste disposal; electricity; and telecommunications.
- The Housing Programs address rural America’s need for single-family and multi-family housing as well as health facilities, fire and police stations, and other community facilities.

- The Business Programs provide help to rural areas that need to develop new job opportunities, allowing businesses and cooperatives to remain viable in a changing economy.
- The Community Development Programs provide special initiatives to demonstrate effective community development techniques and address unique and pressing economic development issues.

In summary, Rural Development works in partnership with other entities—such as State, local, and tribal governments, private and nonprofit organizations, and member-owned cooperatives—to revitalize rural areas.

Rural Development programs are available across the Nation through 47 State offices and 800 area and local offices. Information on your nearest Rural Development State Office can be accessed on the Rural Development Web site (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>) at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html.

Utilities Programs

Modern utilities came to rural America through some of the most successful government initiatives in American history. To carry out these initiatives, USDA worked with rural cooperatives, nonprofit associations, public bodies, and for-profit utilities.

Today, USDA Rural Development carries on this tradition by helping rural utilities to expand and update their technology and to establish new and vital services such as distance learning, telemedicine, and broadband Internet connectivity. The public-private partnership forged between Rural Development and these industries results in billions of dollars in rural infrastructure development and creates thousands of jobs for the rural American economy.

Planning for, developing, and maintaining a community's physical infrastructure is essential both for service to current residents and for future economic competitiveness. For the Nation's rural areas to succeed, citizens must have affordable access to water, sewerage, solid waste disposal, electricity, telecommunications services, and high-speed broadband, spurring business growth and increasing residence in rural areas.

Rural Development Utilities Program Tools

USDA Rural Development is able to offer loans and competitive grants for all types of community infrastructure. In addition, we work with our partners to provide technical assistance to communities to help local leaders make infrastructure decisions and obtain financing from multiple sources.

The utilities program provides water and waste disposal loans and grants, solid waste management grants, broadband, distance learning and telemedicine loans and grants, and other

technical assistance and training grants. Electric and telephone loans are available through rural utilities field representatives.

Below are descriptions of primary utilities programs. For more information about any of these program areas, contact Rural Development at a local office or State office, or the nearest USDA Service Center. USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: look for “U.S. Department of Agriculture.”

Electric Program

Providing reliable, affordable electricity is essential to the economic well-being and quality of life for all of the Nation’s rural residents. The Electric Program provides leadership and capital to upgrade, expand, maintain, and replace America’s vast rural electric infrastructure. Under the authority of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, Rural Development makes direct loans and loan guarantees to electric utilities to serve customers in rural areas. Through the Electric Program, the Federal Government is the majority note holder for more than 700 electric systems.

In addition, the Electric Program makes loans and loan guarantees to finance the construction of electric distribution, transmission, and generation facilities, including system improvements and replacement required to furnish and improve electric service in rural areas to meet changing environmental requirements. Loans and loan guarantees also support demand-side management, energy conservation programs, and on-grid and off-grid renewable energy systems.

The Electric Program makes loans to corporations, States, Indian tribes, territories and subdivisions, and agencies such as municipalities, people’s utility districts, and cooperative, nonprofit, limited-dividend, or mutual associations that provide retail electric service to rural areas or supply the power needs of distribution borrowers in rural areas. The Electric Program also provides financial assistance to rural communities with extremely high energy costs to acquire, construct, extend, upgrade, and otherwise improve energy generation, transmission, or distribution facilities. Rural Development’s Electric Program services approximately 700 active electric borrowers in 47 States.

Water and Environmental Program

The Water and Environmental Program (WEP) provides a combination of loans, grants, and loan guarantees for drinking water, sanitary sewer, solid waste, and storm drainage facilities in rural areas and cities and towns of 10,000 or less. Public bodies, nonprofit organizations, and recognized Indian tribes may apply for assistance. WEP also makes grants to nonprofit organizations to provide technical assistance and training to assist rural communities with water, wastewater, and solid waste management.

Telecommunications Program

The Telecommunications Program provides many programs for financing rural America’s telecommunications infrastructure. The “traditional” infrastructure loan program, consisting of hardship rate, Treasury rate, and guaranteed loans, provides financing of broadband and other

advanced services such as the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program (DLT). The DLT program continues its mission to wire our schools and improve health care delivery in rural America. Through the Community Connect Grant Program, unserved areas may be eligible to receive grants that provide, on a “community-oriented connectivity” basis, broadband transmission service that fosters economic growth, delivers enhanced education and health care, and provides for public safety.

Since 1995, every telephone line constructed with Telecommunications Program financing has been capable of providing broadband service using digital subscriber loop (DSL) technology.

In addition, the Telecommunications Program has been tasked with administering several new and developing programs for improving the quality of life in rural America. The Broadband Program, a loan program designed specifically to increase the rate of deployment of technology to small towns in rural areas, has enabled Rural Development to step beyond its traditional definition of rural (towns of 5,000 or less), and fund borrowers serving communities of up to 20,000 inhabitants. Another program, the Weather Radio Grant Program, provides funding for weather radio transmitters in rural areas, enabling the installation of early warning systems that save lives.

The borrowers of the Telecommunications Program have been at work for more than 50 years to solve challenges associated with serving rural America. Rural carriers are providing more access and a higher deployment rate of access. Rural Development hopes to continue to help those carriers continue that trend through its financing programs.

Additional Information

Whom to Contact: Utilities Programs, National Office, USDA Rural Development, Room 4051-S, Mail Stop 1510, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-1510 (telephone: 202-720-9540; TTY: 800-877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-720-1725; Web site: <http://www.usda.gov/rus>).

Administering Agency: USDA Rural Development, Room 205-W, Mail Stop 0107, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0107 (telephone: 202-720-4581; TTY: 800-877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-720-2080; Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>).

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Housing and Community Facilities Program

One of Rural Development’s key goals is to improve the quality of life in rural areas. In 2004, USDA marked its 55th year of financing homes for rural residents.

Rural Development helps rural communities and individuals by providing loans and grants for housing and community facilities. Funding supports single-family homes, apartments for low-income persons or the elderly, housing for farm laborers, childcare centers, fire and police stations, hospitals, libraries, nursing homes, schools, and other needed facilities.

In partnership with nonprofit organizations, Indian tribes, State and Federal Government agencies, and local communities, Rural Development creates packages of technical assistance and loan and grant funds. These resources not only strengthen existing partnerships, but cultivate and sustain relationships with borrowers and grantees as well.

Rural Development Housing Program Tools

Providing safe and affordable housing for low and moderate-income rural Americans is central to Rural Development’s mission. Quality housing provides an economic benefit to communities and gives individuals and families a sound footing, enabling their success.

The housing program delivers its services through direct and guaranteed single-family home loans, self-help housing loans, loans and grants for housing improvement and renovation, and housing preservation grants. Rural rental housing loans allow for construction and renovation of rental units for low-income residents in rural areas. Rental assistance provides subsidized rent to low-income individuals, families, and elderly resident occupants of USDA-financed rental properties.

Below are descriptions of primary housing programs. For more information on any of these programs, contact your local Rural Development office, State Rural Development office, or the nearest USDA Service Center. USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: look for “U.S. Department of Agriculture.”

Single Family Housing Program

The Single Family Housing Program offers two types of home-ownership loans: guaranteed and direct. The purpose is to provide home ownership opportunities to low- and moderate-income rural families and individuals through financing—with no down payment and at favorable rates and terms—either through a direct loan with the Single Family Housing Program or with a loan from a private financial institution that is guaranteed by the Housing Program. These loans are for the purchase, construction, rehabilitation, or relocation of a home. Grants are also available for home repair, rehabilitation, self-help technical assistance, and other ventures. Here is a full list of programs in the Single Family Housing Program:

- Rural Housing Guaranteed Loans
- Rural Housing Direct Loans
- Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Loans
- Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Grants
- Self-Help Technical Assistance Grants
- Mutual Self-Help Loans

- Rural Housing Site Loans
- Individual Water and Waste Grants
- Housing Application Packaging Grants

Individual applicants are eligible if they meet income limits and other eligibility requirements for the specific type of assistance requested.

Multi-Family Housing Program

This program is designed to increase the supply of affordable multi-family housing through partnerships between Rural Development's Housing Program and major lending sources, as well as State, tribal, and local housing finance agencies and bond insurers. The program provides effective new forms of financing for the development of affordable multi-family housing. Following is a full list of programs in the Multi-Family Housing Program:

- Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants
- Rural Rental Housing
- Housing Preservation Grant
- Guaranteed Rental Housing
- Rental Assistance Program

The applicant in the Guaranteed Rental Housing Program is the lender, who will use the guarantee as a credit enhancement and so be more likely to make the loan. The lender must be approved by the Housing Program or HUD, or be a State Housing Finance agency. The projects must be located in rural areas as defined by USDA Rural Development. Occupants must be very-low-income, low-income, moderate-income, elderly, handicapped, or disabled. Income may not exceed 115 percent of the area median income.

Community Facilities Programs

Community Facilities go hand in hand with economic development. For rural towns and communities to succeed, they must have an affordable means of providing water, sewerage and solid waste disposal, and electric and telecommunications services. Communities are also enhanced when they can obtain affordable financing for single-family and multi-family housing and the schools, libraries, hospitals, fire stations, and other facilities needed and desired by their residents. Rural Development can assist in all these areas either directly through our programs or indirectly by accurate referrals to partner agencies.

Rural Development's Community Facilities Program offers and coordinates capacity building, technical assistance, and financing assistance for rural communities and Indian tribes. It also delivers the agency's Community Facilities Loan and Grant Programs, which can contribute financing to local governments and nonprofits for buildings and/or equipment related to essential community services such as education, health care, libraries, and fire protection.

The Community Facilities Program administers programs designed to finance and facilitate the development of essential community facilities and services in rural areas. These facilities include

hospitals, clinics, elder care facilities, child care, fire and rescue stations, police stations, community centers, public buildings, vocational and medical rehabilitation centers, group homes, schools, educational and cultural facilities, and public transportation.

The following table provides examples of projects that may be eligible for essential community facilities under the Community Facilities Loan and Grant Programs.

**Examples of Projects That May Be Eligible
For Essential Community Facilities**

Community Health Care

Dental Clinic	Hospital (General and Surgical)
Nursing Home	Medical Rehabilitation Center
Assisted Living Facility	Psychiatric Hospital
Physicians Clinic	Outpatient Clinic
Boarding Home for the Elderly	

Cultural and Educational

All Purpose Buildings/College Campus	Outdoor Theatre
Colleges	Public School
Educational Camp for Physically and Mentally Challenged	School Maintenance and Equipment
Library	Service Center
Museum	Vocational School

Energy Transmission and Distribution

Electric Equipment Maintenance Building	Natural Gas Distribution
Low Head Hydro-Electric Facility	

Fire, Rescue, and Public Safety

Civil Defense Building	Mobile Communications Center
Communications Center	Multi-Service Fire/Rescue Building
Fire Department Building	Equipment Building
Fire Trucks	Jaws of Life
Jail	

Community Support Buildings and Improvements

Adult Day Care Center	Data Processing Center
Child Day Care Center	Food Preparation Center
City Hall	Food Storage and Distribution Center
Community Health Department	Heating Plant for Public Buildings
County Office Building	Home for Delinquents
Community Center	Public Maintenance Building
County Courthouse	
Courthouse Annex	

Transportation

Airport Hanger
Airport
Bridge
City Airport
Municipal and County Garage
Off-street Parking
Municipal Dock
Special Transportation Equipment
Sidewalks
Street Improvements
Infrastructure for Industrial Park
Railroad
Town Bus Service/Equipment
Marina

Utility

Telemedicine/Distance Learning
Natural Gas

Other

Agricultural Fairgrounds
Animal Shelter
Dike
Oceanfront Protection
Special Services Building
Sprinkler System

Direct loans, loan guarantees, and grants for eligible projects are available to public entities such as tribal governments, municipalities, counties, special-purpose districts, and nonprofit corporations. In addition, applicants must have the legal authority to borrow and repay loans, to pledge security of loans, and to construct, operate, and maintain the facilities. They must also be financially sound and able to organize and manage the facility effectively. Repayment of the loan must be based on tax assessments, revenues, fees, or other sources of funds sufficient for operation and maintenance, reserves, and debt retirement.

Additional Information

Whom to Contact: Housing Programs, National Office, USDA Rural Development, Room 5014-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 0701, Washington, DC 20250-0701 (telephone: 202-690-1533; TTY: 800-877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-690-0500; Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs>).

Housing Programs Centralized Servicing Center: P.O. Box 66889, St. Louis, MO 63166 (telephone: 1-800/414-1226 [toll free]; TTY: 800-438-1832 [toll free]; fax: 314-206-2805).

Administering Agency: USDA Rural Development, Room 205-W, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 0107, Washington, DC 20250-0107 (telephone: 202-720-4581; TTY: 800-877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-720-2080; Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>).

Rural Development programs are available across the Nation through 47 State offices and 800 area and local offices. Information on your nearest Rural Development State Office can be accessed on the Rural Development Web site (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>) at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html.

Business and Cooperative Programs

The mission of Rural Business and Cooperative Programs is “to enhance the quality of life for rural Americans by providing leadership in building competitive businesses, including sustainable cooperatives that can prosper in the global marketplace.” Rural Development meets these goals by investing financial resources in and providing technical assistance to businesses and cooperatives located in rural communities and by establishing strategic alliances and partnerships that leverage public, private, and cooperative resources to create jobs and stimulate rural economic activity.

Rural Development Business and Cooperative Program Tools

The Rural Business and Cooperative Programs deliver support through business and industry loan guarantees, the Intermediary Relending Program, Rural Business Enterprise Grants, and Rural Business Opportunity Grants as well as through the cooperative program.

Promoting a dynamic business environment in rural America is the goal of the Rural Development Business Programs (BP). BP works in partnership with the private sector and community-based organizations to provide financial assistance and business planning. It also helps fund projects that create or preserve quality jobs and/or promote a clean rural environment.

The financial resources of BP are often leveraged with those of other public and private credit source lenders to meet business and credit needs in underserved areas. Recipients of these programs may be individuals, corporations, partnerships, cooperatives, public bodies, nonprofit corporations, Indian tribes, and private companies.

Below are descriptions of primary business programs. For more information on any of these programs, contact your local Rural Development office, State Rural Development office, or the nearest USDA Service Center. USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: look for “U.S. Department of Agriculture.”

Business and Industry Loan Guarantees

A central objective of Rural Development is to participate in the improvement, development, or financing of business and industry and to improve the employment and economic climate in rural communities. This objective is achieved through bolstering the existing private credit structure by providing up to 90 percent guarantees on quality loans to provide lasting job creation and community benefits. It is not intended that the guarantee authority be used for marginal or substandard loans or to “bail out” lenders with such loans.

Intermediary Re-lending Program

BP helps to finance business facilities and community development projects in communities of 25,000 or less by making these loans to nonprofit intermediaries, which in turn provide loans to businesses in a rural area.

Rural Business Enterprise Grants

Rural Development can make rural business enterprise grants to Indian tribes, public bodies, and nonprofits to assist small and emerging private business enterprises. Funds may be used to conduct feasibility studies, provide technical assistance, or establish a revolving loan fund.

Rural Business Opportunity Grants

Rural Development can make rural business opportunity grants to Indian tribes, public bodies, and nonprofits to promote economic development initiatives in rural communities with exceptional needs. This is accomplished by providing planning, technical assistance, and training.

Rural Economic Development Loans

To promote rural economic development and job creation projects, Rural Development can provide a “zero interest” Rural Economic Development loan to an electric or telephone utility that it finances.

Rural Economic Development Grants

Rural Development can provide grants from the business and cooperative programs to rural communities through rural utilities borrowers. These grants can be used for revolving loan funds, for community facilities and infrastructure, and for assistance in conjunction with an REDL.

Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the Farm Bill) established the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program under Title IX, Section 9006. This program currently funds grants and loan guarantees to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for assistance with purchasing renewable energy systems and making energy efficiency improvements.

Cooperatives Program Overview

The mission of Rural Development’s Cooperative Program is to promote understanding and use of the cooperative form of business as a viable organizational option for marketing and distributing agricultural products. We serve cooperative members, directors, management, educational institutions, organizations, rural residents, and all others with an interest in the cooperative form of business. We strive to assist them to use cooperatives effectively to improve their economic well-being and quality of life.

Across the Nation, the Cooperative Program has assisted small agricultural producers in forming business cooperatives to stabilize and increase incomes. Other small business owners may find it beneficial to form a cooperative for reasons such as shared marketing, supply purchases, or research and development.

The Cooperative Program helps rural residents not only form new cooperative businesses but also improve the operations of existing cooperatives. To accomplish this, the program provides technical assistance, conducts cooperative-related research, and produces informational products to promote public understanding of cooperatives and give a wide range of assistance to people interested in forming cooperatives. This help varies from an initial feasibility study to the creation and implementation of a business plan.

Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program

Rural Cooperative Development grants help establish and operate centers for cooperative development, primarily to encourage development of new cooperatives and improve operations

of existing ones. The development of effective cooperative organizations in rural America is an important part of Rural Development's efforts.

Value-Added Producer Grants

Grants may be used for planning activities and for working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products and for farm-based renewable energy. Eligible applicants are independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, agricultural producer groups, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures.

Additional Information

Whom to Contact: Business and Cooperative Programs, National Office, USDA Rural Development, Room 5045-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 3201, Washington, DC 20250-3201 (telephone: 202-690-4730; TTY: 800-877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-690-4737; Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs>).

Administering Agency: USDA Rural Development, Room 205-W, Mail Stop 0107, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0107 (telephone: 202-720-4581; TTY: 800-877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-720-2080; Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>).

Rural Development programs are available across the Nation through 47 State offices and 800 area and local offices. Information on your nearest Rural Development State Office can be accessed on the Rural Development Web site (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>) at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html.

Community Development Programs

Rural Development administers community development programs. Each program and initiative promotes self-sustaining, long-term economic and community development in rural areas. The programs demonstrate how every rural community can achieve self-sufficiency through innovative and comprehensive strategic plans developed and implemented at a grassroots level. The programs stress continued local involvement and decisionmaking that is supported by partnerships among private, public, and nonprofit entities.

This effort promotes self-sustaining, long-term economic and community development in areas of pervasive poverty, unemployment, and general distress. The program works by helping distressed communities develop and implement innovative, comprehensive strategic plans supported by partnerships among private, public, and nonprofit entities. This assistance is available through Rural Development field offices to rural communities throughout the United States. The help includes technical assistance and support in obtaining additional financial resources and assistance in forging local and regional partnerships.

Rural Development's Community Development Programs offer three rural community empowerment efforts: Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC), Champion Communities, and Rural Economic Area Partnership Zones. The Community Development Programs office also administers the State Rural Development Councils through the National Rural Development Partnership.

Below are descriptions of primary community development programs. For more information on any of these programs, contact your local Rural Development office, State Rural Development office, or the nearest USDA Service Center. USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: look for "U.S. Department of Agriculture."

Rural Community Empowerment Program

The goal of the EZ/EC Program is to create empowered communities. These communities are able to implement self-generated strategic plans that solve economic and social challenges. The EZ/EC Program promotes Federal, State, and local agencies working cooperatively and in partnership with the private sector, nonprofit organizations, and communities. Applications were accepted for this program in three separate competitive funding rounds. Currently, applications are not being accepted, and the last EZ/EC designations are set to expire in 2009.

National Rural Development Partnership

The National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) builds collaborations among key rural institutions, enabling them to work more effectively and efficiently. The Partnership brings together partners from local, State, tribal, and Federal governments and from the for-profit and nonprofit sectors through State Rural Development Councils. Councils currently operate in about 40 States.

NRDP acts as a nonpartisan forum for identifying, discussing, and acting on issues affecting rural America. The Partnership does not supplant, duplicate, or compete with any program, but rather facilitates coordination and collaboration among its partners to improve implementation of rural programs.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is provided to local communities and groups in planning rural development activities, partnership building, and essential community projects. Assistance often includes helping communities inventory their resources and identify the resources of others for local use. The program also offers support in obtaining additional financial resources and assistance in forging local and regional partnerships.

Additional Information

Whom to Contact: Community Development Programs, National Office, USDA Rural Development, Room 266, 300 7th Street, SW, Mail Stop 3203, Washington, DC 20250-3203

(telephone: 202-619-7980; TTY: 800-877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-401-7420; Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ocd>).

Administering Agency: USDA Rural Development, Room 205-W, Mail Stop 0107, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0107 (telephone: 202-720-4581; TTY: 800- 877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-720-2080; Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>).

Rural Development programs are available across the Nation through 47 State offices and 800 area and local offices. Information on your nearest Rural Development State Office can be accessed on the Rural Development Web site (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>) at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html.

Rural Development's Support of American Indian and Alaska Native Customers

Rural Development employs a Native American Coordinator in the National Office in Washington, DC. Rural Development's Native American Coordinator has five major roles:

1. To provide policy and program guidance to key agency personnel as it relates to the delivery of programs and resources to American Indian and Alaska Native clients.
2. To represent Rural Development in reaching out to Indian tribes, tribal officials, and advocacy organizations.
3. To coordinate policies and initiatives with other Federal agencies, financing institutions, and constituency groups.
4. To oversee and manage data analysis and research on American Indian and Alaska Native issues.
5. To initiate training initiatives and provide direct training to all Rural Development staff on a breadth of Native American issues.

Rural Development also has a Native American Coordinator in each State that has a Federal- or State-recognized Indian tribe within its borders. The primary role of the individuals in these field positions is to coordinate the outreach efforts of Rural Development with the Indian tribes within their respective States.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: Tedd Buelow, Acting Native American Coordinator, USDA Rural Development, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 3250, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-690-1681; fax: 202-205-3215).

You may find more information on Rural Development opportunities and activities with tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal members on Rural Development's Web site for American Indian and Alaskan Native customers (<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/aian>). The Web site also includes a State-by-State directory of American Indian and Alaska Native Program Information AI/AN Coordinators.

Administering Agency: USDA Rural Development, Room 205-W, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 0107, Washington, DC 20250-0107 (telephone: 202-720-4581; TTY: 800-877-8339 [Federal Information Relay Service]; fax: 202-720-2080; Web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>).

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5. Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

USDA's Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS) mission area works to harness the Nation's agricultural abundance to improve nutrition and health in the United States. FNCS ensures access to nutritious, healthful diets for all Americans, including American Indian communities.

Through its nutrition assistance and nutrition education programs for consumers, FNCS encourages consumers to make healthful food choices. Today, rather than simply providing food, FNCS works to empower consumers with knowledge of the link between diet and health and with dietary guidance based on research.

Benefits to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes

Through FNCS' Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP), three types of programs provide benefits to American Indian and Alaska Native tribes:

1. American Indians or Indian tribes are included among designated beneficiaries of the Food Stamp Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

Provisions of the law (or regulations, in the case of CSFP) routinely permit Indian Tribal Organizations to administer the CSFP and WIC, where appropriate.

All low-income households, including American Indian households, may be eligible for the Food Stamp Program, while low-income households with pregnant and postpartum women and their infants and young children may also be eligible for WIC or CSFP. CSFP also serves the elderly.

2. Designed to benefit entire communities, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations serves low-income households living on Indian reservations and low-income American Indian households living in approved service areas near reservations or in Oklahoma.
3. Programs not specifically naming American Indians or Indian tribes as beneficiaries do nevertheless benefit them. These include the following child nutrition programs: the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Special Milk Program, and the Summer Food Service Program. Children who participate in the Food Stamp Program or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, described in this guide, are automatically eligible to receive free meals or free milk under these programs.

In addition, FNS provides surplus commodities, as available, to needy people in charitable institutions, and to States, Indian Tribal Organizations, and elderly nutrition projects under the Older Americans Act.

FNS also donates food to needy persons in declared areas through disaster relief agencies.

Food and Nutrition Service

The Food and Nutrition Service seeks to improve the quality of nutritional intake, increase food security, and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.

FNS also administers the nutrition assistance programs of USDA. The mission of FNS is to provide children and needy families better access to food and a more healthful diet through its nutrition assistance programs and comprehensive nutrition education efforts. FNS has elevated nutrition and nutrition education to a top priority in all its programs. In addition to providing access to nutritious food, FNS also works to empower program participants with knowledge of the link between diet and health.

FNS Programs

FNS was established as a separate agency on August 8, 1969, although many of the nutrition assistance programs long predated it. The Food Stamp Program, now the cornerstone of USDA's nutrition assistance, began in its modern form in 1961. It originated in the Food Stamp Plan to help the needy in the 1930s.

The National School Lunch Program also has its roots in Depression-era efforts to help children. The Needy Family Program, which evolved into the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, was the primary means of food assistance for low-income Americans during the Great Depression.

Above all, FNS is an action-oriented agency that works with other Federal and State agencies, Indian tribes, agricultural interests, and the general public to carry out its mission. FNS nutrition assistance programs provide a safety net to help the most vulnerable in our society meet their nutritional needs.

FNS strives, through its programs, to empower all consumers with knowledge of the link between diet and health and to encourage consumers to make healthful food choices through nutrition education and promotion activities. The goal is to continue a long history of helping families and individuals secure a nutritious diet and to build on this success with targeted improvements in three areas—increasing program access, promoting better eating habits, and strengthening stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

Primary FNS programs that are federally funded through FNS but administered at the State and local levels are described below. For national, State, and local contacts for each of the programs, contact the Food and Nutrition Service, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 926, Alexandria, VA 22302 (telephone: 703-305-2062).

You may also obtain local office information about an FNS field or satellite office on the FNS Web site (<http://www.fns.usda.gov>), or you may wish to contact an FNS Regional Office near you (to access a listing of FNS Regional Offices, select “Contact Us” on the FNS Web site). USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: look for “U.S. Department of Agriculture.” You can also find contact information on the FNS Web site (<http://www.fns.usda.gov>) for the State agencies that administer the programs.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) provides commodity foods to low-income households living on Indian reservations and to low-income American Indian households residing in approved service areas near reservations or in Oklahoma. Many households participate in the FDPIR as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program because they do not have easy access to food stamp offices or authorized food stores.

FNS administers this program at the Federal level. Locally, Indian Tribal Organizations or an agency of a State government are in charge. Currently, there are approximately 90,000 people participating monthly in FDPIR in 257 tribes administered through 98 Indian Tribal Organizations and 5 State agencies.

In this program, USDA purchases commodities to ship to the Indian Tribal Organizations and State agencies. The commodities are selected from a list of available foods. The administering agencies store and distribute the food, determine applicant eligibility, and provide nutrition education to recipients. USDA provides the administering agencies with funds for program administrative costs.

Low-income American Indian and non-Indian households that reside on a reservation, and low-income households living in approved service areas near a reservation or in Oklahoma and containing at least one person who is a member of a federally recognized tribe, are eligible to participate in FDPIR. The income threshold is 100 percent of the poverty level or below. Households are certified based on income and resource standards set by the Federal Government and must be recertified at least every 12 months. Households may not participate in FDPIR and the Food Stamp Program in the same month. For more information, e-mail FDPIR at fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov to request a factsheet.

Food Stamp Program

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) provides low-income households with benefits on an electronic card that they can use to purchase approved foods at most grocery stores to ensure that they have

access to a healthful diet. FSP, which is the cornerstone of the Federal food assistance programs, provides crucial support to needy households and to those making the transition from welfare to work. FSP is currently serving about 26 million people, including nearly 400,000 Native Americans.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers FSP at the Federal level through FNS. State agencies administer the program at State and local levels, determining eligibility, allotments, and distribution of benefits.

Households must meet eligibility requirements and provide information—and verification—regarding their household circumstances. U.S. citizens and some immigrants who are admitted for permanent residency may qualify. The statute limits benefits for unemployed, able-bodied, childless adults.

Local food stamp offices can provide information about eligibility. Most States also have a toll-free information and/or hotline number. USDA operates a toll-free number (800-221-5689) for people wishing to receive information about FSP. Income eligibility is set at 130 percent of poverty, based on the number of persons in the household. There is also a limit on household resources and certain nonfinancial eligibility criteria. The Office of Management and Budget establishes Federal poverty guidelines, and the Department of Health and Human Services updates the income figures annually.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) serves to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care at no cost. Participants must meet income guidelines and a State residency requirement and must be individually determined to be at “nutritional risk” by a health professional.

To be eligible on the basis of income, applicants’ gross income (i.e., before taxes are withheld) must fall at or below 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines. Participation in certain other benefit programs, such as the Food Stamp Program, or participation of a family member in Medicaid or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, automatically causes the applicant to meet the income eligibility requirement.

WIC is not an entitlement program in that Congress does not set aside funds to allow every eligible individual to participate in the program. Instead, WIC is a Federal grant program for which Congress authorizes a specific amount of funding each year for program operations.

FNS administers the program at the Federal level and provides funds to WIC State agencies (State health departments or comparable agencies) to pay for WIC foods, nutrition counseling and education, and administrative costs. Indian Tribal Organizations, bands, groups, or their authorized representatives that are recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the U.S.

Department of the Interior or the appropriate area office of the Indian Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services may also serve as WIC State agencies. The program is available in all 50 States, 34 Indian Tribal Organizations, the District of Columbia, and American Territories. These 90 WIC State agencies administer the program through 2,200 local agencies and 9,000 clinic sites for 8.1 million participants, including about 130,000 Native Americans.

Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) plays a vital role in improving the quality of day care by making it more affordable for low-income providers and by encouraging centers to serve nutritious meals to eligible children attending day care. Children receive nutritious meals and snacks for which providers receive reimbursements through CACFP.

The program also provides meals and snacks to adults who receive care in nonresidential adult day care centers. CACFP reaches even further to provide meals to children residing in homeless shelters, as well as snacks and suppers to youths participating in eligible after-school care programs.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) works to improve the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, other new mothers up to 1 year postpartum, infants, children up to age 6, and elderly people at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA commodity foods. CSFP provides food and administrative funds to administering States and Indian Tribal Organizations to supplement the diets of these groups.

WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Associated with WIC, the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program was established by Congress in 1992 to provide fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables from farmers' markets to WIC participants. The program was also established to expand the awareness of, and sales at, farmers' markets. Each State agency is responsible for authorizing individual farmers, farmers' markets, or both. Currently, 45 State agencies and 5 Indian Tribal Organizations administer the FMNP.

Food Assistance for Disaster Relief

FNS also has the primary responsibility of supplying food to disaster relief organizations such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army for mass feeding or household distribution. Disaster organizations request food and nutrition assistance through State agencies that administer USDA's nutrition assistance programs. State agencies notify USDA of the types and quantities of food that relief organizations need for emergency feeding operations.

National School Lunch Program

Under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), participating school districts and independent schools receive cash reimbursements and donated commodities from USDA for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve lunches that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced-price lunches to eligible low-income children. School districts can also be reimbursed for snacks served to children through age 18 in after-school educational or enrichment programs.

School Breakfast Program

The School Breakfast Program operates in the same manner as NSLP. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the breakfast program receive cash reimbursement from USDA for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve breakfasts that meet Federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced-price breakfasts to eligible children.

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

This program awards grants to States, U.S. Territories, and federally recognized Indian tribal governments to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs.

Special Milk Program

Under the Special Milk Program, participating schools and institutions receive reimbursement from USDA for each half-pint of milk served. They must operate their milk programs on a nonprofit basis. They agree to use the Federal reimbursement to reduce the cost of milk to all children.

Summer Food Service Program

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to help children in low-income areas get the nutrition they need to learn, play, and grow during school vacations. Children who are age 18 and under, and people over age 18 who are determined by a State educational agency to have a mental or physical disability, may receive meals through the SFSP when school is out. SFSP meals are accessible to children through local sponsors who provide meals at feeding sites such as schools, community centers, parks, churches, pools, housing projects, playgrounds, migrant centers, or Indian reservations.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

Under The Emergency Food Assistance Program, FNS provides administrative funds and commodity foods to States. The States provide the food to local agencies that they have selected, usually food banks, which, in turn, distribute the food to soup kitchens and food pantries that

directly serve the public. States also “pass-through” at least 40 percent of the administrative funds to help support the storage and distribution of the commodities at the local level.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: For national, State, and local contacts for each of the programs, contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 926, Alexandria, VA 22302 (telephone: 703-305-2062).

You may also obtain local office information about an FNS field or satellite office on the FNS Web site (<http://www.fns.usda.gov>), or you may wish to contact an FNS Regional Office near you. (To access a listing of FNS Regional Offices, select “Contact Us” on the FNS Web site.) USDA offices are generally listed in the telephone book under the Federal Government headings: look for “U.S. Department of Agriculture.” You can also find contact information on the FNS Web site (<http://www.fns.usda.gov>) for the State agencies that administer the programs.

Administering Agency: Food and Nutrition Service, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 926, Alexandria, VA 22302 (telephone: 703-305-2062; Web site: <http://www.fns.usda.gov>).

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) was created in USDA on December 1, 1994. Its mission is to improve the health of Americans by developing and promoting dietary guidance that links scientific research to the nutrition needs of consumers.

CNPP is responsible for the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, MyPyramid, the Thrifty Food Plan, and the Interactive Healthy Eating Index, which are the core of nutrition promotion in FNS’ nutrition assistance programs. The Center uses these and other tools to promote nutrition to all Americans. CNPP reports to the Office of the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services.

The staff at CNPP is composed primarily of nutritionists, nutrition scientists, dietitians, economists, and policy experts who help to define and coordinate nutrition education policy within USDA and to translate nutrition research into information and materials for consumers, policymakers, and professionals in health, education, industry, and the news media.

CNPP carries out its mission to improve the health of Americans by advancing and promoting food and nutrition guidance for all Americans, assessing diet quality, and advancing consumer, nutrition, and food economic knowledge.

The Center is best known for the MyPyramid food guidance system as well as for its work on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The Center can be accessed online at <http://www.MyPyramid.gov> and <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov>.

CNPP publishes a variety of dietary guidance materials in addition to the annual report “Expenditures on Children by Families.” In conjunction with the U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services, the Center publishes the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The Center also maintains and updates the Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost, and Liberal Food Plan as well as the Thrifty Food Plan, which serves as the nutritional basis for determination of Food Stamp Program benefits.

CNPP Projects

Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* are the foundation of Federal nutrition policy and nutrition education activities. The *Dietary Guidelines* are issued by USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and are updated every 5 years. The most recent *Dietary Guidelines* were issued in January 2005.

MyPyramid

MyPyramid, released in April 2005, replaces the original Food Guide Pyramid. MyPyramid is a widely recognized nutrition education tool that translates nutritional recommendations into the kinds and amounts of food to eat each day. MyPyramid stresses the importance of moderation, personalization, proportionality, variety, activity, and gradual improvement.

MyPyramid for Kids

MyPyramid for Kids, released in September 2005, replaces the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children and is an adaptation of MyPyramid. The tool is designed to simplify educational messages and focus on young children's food preferences and nutritional requirements. MyPyramid for Kids contains an online game for children, the Blast Off game, which allows children to learn how to build a healthy diet while attempting to "blast off" to Planet Power.

MyPyramid Tracker

MyPyramid Tracker is an online dietary and physical activity assessment tool that provides information on your diet quality and physical activity status as well as related nutrition messages and links to nutrient and physical activity information. The Food Calories/Energy Balance feature automatically calculates your energy balance by subtracting the energy you expend in physical activity from your food calories/energy intake.

Use of this tool helps you better understand your energy balance status and enhances the link between good nutrition and regular physical activity. MyPyramid Tracker translates the principles of the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and other nutrition standards developed by USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services into information for the individual user.

My Pyramid Plan

MyPyramid Plan is an online dietary assessment tool that provides information on diet quality and physical activity status. By entering age, gender, and physical activity-level information, you can determine the amount of food you should eat from each food group.

USDA Food Plans

The Thrifty, Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost, and Liberal Plans each represent a nutritious diet at a different cost. The Thrifty Food Plan is used as the basis for food stamp benefits.

Interactive Healthy Eating Index

The USDA Healthy Eating Index is a summary measure of overall diet quality. It provides a picture of the type and quantity of foods people eat and the degree to which diets comply with specific dietary recommendations. CNPP has developed an interactive version of the Healthy Eating Index, the IHEI, which can be accessed on the Internet to assess a person's diet.

The Nutrient Content of the U.S. Food Supply

The Nutrient Content of the U.S. Food Supply is a historical data series, which began in 1909, on the amounts of nutrients available for consumption on a per person/per day basis. An interactive version of this series allows users to query nutrient and pyramid servings information online.

Expenditures on Children by Families

Expenditures on Children by Families provide estimates of the cost of raising children from birth through age 17. USDA has provided these estimates since 1960, and they are used in developing State child support guidelines, foster care payments, and family educational programs. The expenditure estimates are provided for major components of the budget (e.g., housing, transportation, clothing, and food) by age of the child, family income, and region of residence.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034, Alexandria, VA 22302-1594 (telephone: 703-305-7600; fax: 703-305-3300; Web site: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov>). Information on the MyPyramid food guidance system is accessible at <http://www.MyPyramid.gov>.

Administering Agency: Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034, Alexandria, VA 22302-1594 (telephone: 703-305-7600; fax: 703-305-3300; Web sites: <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov> and <http://www.MyPyramid.gov>).

6. Food Safety

USDA's Food Safety mission area ensures that the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and properly labeled and packaged. This mission area also plays a key role in the President's Council on Food Safety and has been instrumental in coordinating a national food safety strategic plan among various partner agencies, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This section provides an overview of the Department's food safety activities and organizations.

Food Safety and Inspection Service

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is USDA's primary food safety agency. It regulates processors and importers of meat, poultry, and egg products and is responsible for ensuring that the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. FSIS is a valuable resource for those operating or wishing to establish food processing facilities.

To meet the increased demand from the American Indian and Alaska Native community for a healthier diet consisting of traditional native foods and to increase economic development, many tribes are developing business plans to establish reservation-based processing facilities. A few tribes are currently producing and retailing meat products, while others are in the development phase. Tribes contemplating the development of slaughter, processing, and retail facilities for meat, poultry, and egg products on Indian lands should first contact the FSIS Office of Field Operations and request information on regulatory and food safety requirements as well as on available technical assistance.

FSIS has a variety of other programs offering assistance to enhance food safety and public health—farm-to-table—that may be of interest to tribal communities.

Background

FSIS' principal authorities include the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) (21 U.S.C. 601, *et. seq.*), the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) (21 U.S.C. 451, *et. seq.*), and the Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA) (21 U.S.C. 103, *et. seq.*).

The Administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection Service reports to the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Food Safety and is responsible for food safety and inspection regulations, policies, and programs. FSIS has more than 9,000 professional, scientific, and technical personnel assigned to approximately 6,300 inspected establishments, approximately 130 import stations, the Technical Service Center, and headquarters locations. The Under Secretary also chairs the U.S. Codex Steering Committee, which provides guidance concerning international food standards to U.S. delegations to the international Codex Alimentarius Commission.

FSIS offers information and assistance in five major areas:

- Regulations and Inspection of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products.

- Food Safety Support Programs.
- Food Safety Education and Outreach.
- Food and Agriculture Defense.
- Technical Assistance, Cooperative Agreements and Training.

Regulations and Inspection of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products

FSIS deals with both Federal and State regulations and inspection programs, as described below.

Federal Inspection Programs

Under authority of the Federal Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products Inspection Acts, FSIS inspects and monitors all meat, poultry, and egg products sold in interstate and foreign commerce to ensure that products are safe and otherwise in compliance with regulatory requirements. The 1996 Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) final rule is in effect in all meat and poultry slaughter and processing establishments. HACCP requires in-plant systems to prevent problems before they occur.

FSIS provides inspection at approximately 6,300 plants that slaughter cattle, swine, sheep, goats, horses, chickens, turkeys, geese, ducks, guineas, ratites, and squabs, as well as plants that process a wide range of products including hams, sausage, stews, eggs, and frozen dinners. Fifteen district offices coordinate inspection throughout the country.

In addition, FSIS regulates related commercial activities to ensure that meat, poultry, and egg products sold commercially are safe, wholesome, and properly labeled and packaged. The agency conducts compliance reviews of federally inspected or exempted products at warehouses, distributors, retail stores, etc., and inspects imported products through a comprehensive system of import controls. FSIS collaborates with States, the Food and Drug Administration, and other Federal agencies on issues that cross jurisdictional lines.

Additional information is available on the FSIS Web site ([http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations & policies/Federal Inspection Programs](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations&policies/Federal%20Inspection%20Programs)).

State Inspection Programs

FSIS has cooperative agreements with 28 States that operate their own meat and poultry inspection (MPI) programs. Establishments producing products for sale only within a State with its own MPI program have the option to apply for State inspection.

Under an agreement with FSIS, State programs must enforce requirements “at least equal to” those imposed under the Federal Inspection Acts. In exchange, FSIS provides approximately \$43 million annually to support State MPI programs.

State MPI programs are an integral part of the Nation's food safety system. They inspect about 2,100 meat and poultry establishments. All of these establishments are small or very small businesses.

Additional information is available on the FSIS Web site ([http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations & policies/state inspection programs](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations&policies/state_inspection_programs)).

Import and Export

The FSIS Office of International Affairs (OIA) manages international food safety activities. Imports are permitted only from countries determined by FSIS to have inspection programs that apply standards equivalent to those of USDA.

In addition, FSIS reinspects imported meat, poultry, and egg products at ports of entry. After the requirements of the U.S. Customs Service and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service are met, shipments imported into the United States must be reinspected by FSIS at an approved import inspection facility. FSIS has about 75 inspectors who carry out reinspection in approximately 125 official import establishments.

FSIS assists exporters by publishing the import requirements of other countries and provides certifications as needed. For most countries, all USDA federally authorized meat, poultry, and egg product establishments are eligible to export provided that all requirements of the receiving country are met. Some countries, including the European Union, require U.S. establishments to be approved, registered, and/or reviewed prior to export.

Because other countries' requirements vary, exporters should first consult the export requirements for a specific country. This information is obtained by FSIS through direct, government-to-government communication with country officials and is posted on the FSIS Web site.

Export requirements are generally organized under the following headings:

- Product Eligibility
- Labeling
- Processing Requirements
- Documentation
- Other Requirements
- Plant Eligibility

Once an establishment is approved for export to a particular country, exporters may export their products and, where required, are added to the list of Eligible U.S. Establishments. These lists change frequently as new plants are added or changes occur in a plant number or name. Foreign countries may periodically audit establishments exporting to them.

Food Safety Education and Outreach

The Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach (OPAEO) is the public and community relations arm of FSIS. OPAEO is responsible for communicating with three main audiences: Congress, the media, and constituents.

Additionally, OPAEO handles executive correspondence and ensures compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act. Constituent outreach is focused primarily on consumers, industry (especially small businesses), and other government agencies with which FSIS cooperates on food safety.

Consumer Education

The Food Safety Education Staff (FSES) educates consumers about the importance of safe food handling and how to prevent foodborne illnesses. Available educational programs that can be found on the FSIS website (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>) include the following:

- *The Meat and Poultry Hotline*, which provides information on safe food storage, handling, and preparation; product dating and labeling; and other topics.
- *Fight BAC!*TM—a food safety education campaign of the Partnership for Food Safety Education, a nonprofit organization representing all aspects of the food industry as well as government and consumers. Fight BAC!TM strives to educate consumers on four simple steps they can take to fight foodborne bacteria and reduce their risk of foodborne illness. Further information is accessible on the Fight BAC!TM Web site (<http://www.fightbac.org>).
- *Is It Done Yet?* —provides information about cooking. By using a food thermometer to check whether meat, poultry, or egg dishes are done, you can prevent overcooking and eliminate guesswork. *Thermy*, FSIS' thermometer mascot, encourages checking temperatures. Information on the *Is It Done Yet?* campaign can be requested by e-mailing FSIS (IsItDoneYet@fsis.usda.gov).
- *Ask Karen*—a “virtual” food safety representative answers online questions from the public about the prevention of foodborne illness as well as the safe handling, preparation, and storage of meat, poultry, and egg products, drawing upon an extensive database of food safety information.
- *USDA Food Safety Mobile*—an eye-catching education and outreach vehicle that has reached millions of consumers with food safety messages. Information on the USDA Food Safety Mobile is available by e-mailing FSIS (foodsafetymobile@fsis.usda.gov).
- *Meat and Poultry Hotline*—The hotline (1-888-MPHotline or 1-888-674-6854; TTY: 1-800-256-7072; e-mail: Mphotline.fsis@usda.gov) is used to answer consumer food safety questions and provide support for food safety educators and communicators. For further information, contact the Food Safety Education Staff (301-504-0195).

Outreach to Industry and Regulatory Partners

The Office of Strategic Initiatives, Partnerships, and Outreach Staff (SIPO) seeks to promote understanding and support of agency regulations and policies with key constituencies, partners, and the public. It provides informational materials and programs to field personnel, small and very small inspected establishments, and inspection-exempt meat and poultry operations. SIPO also coordinates the activities of the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection.

SIPO provides technical guidance and outreach assistance to Federal, State, and tribal government partners and to underserved populations. Through universities and USDA Extension around the country, staff members arrange for training and technical assistance for small and very small plants that may need assistance with their HACCP and related food safety programs. FSIS has provided a network of HACCP contacts and coordinators in all 50 States, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Additional information is accessible on the FSIS Web site (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/business>).

Food and Agricultural Defense

The Nation's food safety and agriculture defense strategy is an FSIS responsibility. The agency works closely in this area with Federal, State, tribal, and other partners, including the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Additional information is accessible on the FSIS Web site ([http://www.fsis.usda.gov/about_fsis/Associated Agencies & Partners](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/about_fsis/Associated_Agencies_&Partners)).

FSIS' Office of Food Defense and Emergency Response (OFDER) prepares for and coordinates responses to acts and events threatening the U.S. food supply. With support from the Office of Public Health Service, OFDER coordinates all homeland security activities to ensure that policymakers, management, scientists, and field staff are prepared to respond to and recover from emergencies resulting from non-intentional as well as intentional contamination or disasters that may affect domestic meat, poultry, and egg production. OFDER conducts public food security education, awareness, and deterrence activities.

The OPHS Food Emergency Response Network Division works with OFDER and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration to expand and manage an existing group of more than 90 Federal, State, and local laboratories with the capability to detect and identify biological, chemical, and radiological agents in food.

OFDER can provide food defense training and information to Indian tribes with meat, poultry, and egg processing facilities and other food operations. This training can teach tribes how to deter attacks on the food supply by assessing vulnerabilities and implementing food security plans. OFDER has also developed a number of guidelines, listed below, on food defense.

Printed information available from FSIS includes *Food Security Guidelines for Food Processors; Safety and Security Guidelines for the Transportation and Distribution of Meat, Poultry, and Egg Products; Food Safety and Food Security: What Consumers Need to Know; FSIS Model Food Security Plans; and Industry Self-Assessment Checklist for Food Security.*

Information is also available on the FSIS Web site (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>; select Food Safety and Emergency Preparedness). The FSIS Washington, D.C., contact is the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Food Defense and Emergency Response (202-720-5643).

Technical Assistance, Cooperative Agreements, and Training

Technical Assistance

The FSIS Technical Service Center, located in Omaha, Nebraska, provides technical guidance and information on the interpretation and application of regulatory requirements. It also designs systems, methods, guidelines, and procedures for reviewing foreign, State, and domestic programs.

For additional information, contact the FSIS Technical Service Center (telephone: 402-344-5000; fax: 402-344-5005; hotline: 1-800-233-3935; e-mail: TechCenter@fsis.usda.gov).

Cooperative Agreements

FSIS continually seeks out new ideas and strategies to reduce the incidence of food-borne illnesses associated with meat, poultry, and egg products. The agency strengthens its public health capabilities and support for food safety innovation through the funding of cooperative agreements in five specific areas:

- Food animal production, transportation, and marketing.
- Technical materials for small and very small federally and State-inspected establishments.
- Retail stores, food service establishments, and other inspection-exempt enterprises subject to State, local, or tribal regulations that process or otherwise handle meat, poultry, and egg products.
- New technology cooperative agreements, which are used to encourage the development of new methodologies to keep pace with emerging technologies.
- Enhancement of the laboratory testing capability of the Food Emergency Response Network for microbiological threat agents, and integration of data from Federal, State, or local levels to enhance and improve detection of public health hazards.

Materials produced under these agreements are made available for public use.

Funding opportunities are announced and published through the Federal Register, the FSIS Constituent Update, and the FSIS Web site. Public awareness of all segments of rulemaking and policy development is important. Consequently, in an effort to ensure that the public and in particular minorities, women, and persons with disabilities are aware of this notice, FSIS announces it online on the FSIS Web site (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations>).

Training

Using the latest in technology and the assistance of regional trainers and Enforcement, Investigations, and Analysis Officers, FSIS provides a wide variety of training on food safety and food defense to its widely dispersed and diverse audiences. Although most FSIS training activity is focused on FSIS employees, training materials used for the training of agency personnel are available to State and local regulators and are of interest to members of the meat and poultry industry in developing their own training programs. FSIS provides information to producers and agricultural businesses to help them maintain compliance with federally defined regulations for their establishments.

Notable training programs include:

Food Safety Regulatory Essentials Training—This training teaches how inspectors verify that an establishment’s HACCP and other systems are effective. The training covers the Rules of Practice; Sanitation Performance Standards; Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures; HACCP verification; Pathogen Reduction; and Food Safety Sampling.

Entry Training for the Public Health Veterinarian—FSIS has tailored this training program to prepare the Public Health Veterinarian to work as part of an in-plant team in establishments that slaughter various animal species and process various types of food products.

Enforcement Investigation and Analysis Training—This training focuses on enacting and documenting administrative enforcement action in cases involving the violation of food safety requirements. FSIS has trainers assigned to five regional training centers who provide enforcement, investigation, and analysis training for FSIS Consumer Safety Officers, Public Health Veterinarians, and Compliance Officers.

Slaughter Inspection Training—Slaughter inspection training provides basic information that covers the regulatory environment, ante and post mortem inspection, and professionalism and provides a food security overview, a HACCP overview, and other types of information needed by the online inspector. There are two versions of this training—poultry or livestock—depending on the employee’s assignment.

Other Online Training and Resources—To centralize food safety news, information, and training for various government agencies, the www.foodsafety.gov Web site was developed. The site contains current news and information for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Centers for Disease Control, the Food and Drug Administration, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Further information is available on the FSIS Web site (<http://www.foodsafety.gov>).

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: *The Meat and Poultry Hotline* (1-888-MPHotline or 1-888-674-6854; TTY: 1-800-256-7072; e-mail: Mph hotline.fsis@usda.gov); Assistant Administrator for the Office of Food Defense and Emergency Response (202-720-5643); FSIS Technical Service Center (telephone: 402-344-5000; fax: 402-344-5005; hotline: 1-800-233-3935; e-mail: TechCenter@fsis.usda.gov).

Federal Relay Service: Federal Relay Service Communication Assistants act as intermediaries for telecommunications between hearing individuals and individuals who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, and/or have speech disabilities. Call 1-800-877-8339 (TTY).

Administering Agency: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202/720-7025; Web site: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>).

7. Research, Education, and Economics

The Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area is dedicated to the creation of a safe, sustainable, competitive U.S. food and fiber system as well as strong communities, families, and youth through integrated research, analysis, and education.

REE provides Federal leadership for the discovery and dissemination of science-based knowledge to address the wide-ranging problems and opportunities that come under the broad heading of food and agriculture. The public increasingly expects sound science, accurate data, and objective analysis to be an integral part of public decisionmaking.

Building on the extraordinary possibilities of cutting-edge research and new technologies, REE is more capable than ever of delivering environmentally and economically sound solutions to new challenges in production agriculture, food safety, and nutrition. It is also well positioned to ensure that new knowledge and technologies generated by the REE agencies are transferred to the farmers, ranchers, consumers, food processors, and others who will use them.

REE consists of the Agricultural Research Service; the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; the Economic Research Service; the National Agricultural Library; and the National Agricultural Statistics Service. These agencies provide leadership and overall guidance in shaping the food and agricultural research agenda for the Nation, bringing together and listening to the research and stakeholder community regarding common interests and concerns.

The REE agencies work with other agencies across all facets of government and research organizations across the country. They conduct programs spanning the biological, physical, and social sciences related to agricultural research, economic analysis, statistics, outreach, and higher education.

Since its inception, the REE mission area and agencies have sought the advice of customers, partners, and stakeholders in establishing program directions and priorities. Today, more than ever before, these diverse perspectives are valued and solicited by the mission area and its agencies in setting priorities, shaping and implementing programs, and disseminating results. This increased effort to involve stakeholders, partners, and customers is based on a mission area belief that their input and participation will lead to programs that are stronger and more relevant to the issues and problems confronting farmers, ranchers, food processors, and consumers today.

Agricultural Research Service

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is USDA's principal in-house scientific research agency. ARS provides the scientific knowledge and technologies needed to ensure the viability of American agriculture. It conducts research to address agricultural problems of high national priority and aggressively works to transfer research results to the marketplace.

The work of ARS provides the scientific base for the quality, affordability, safety, and variety of the food and agricultural products that all Americans enjoy. One of its primary jobs is finding

solutions to agricultural problems that affect Americans every day, from the field to table. Following are program areas that ARS research covers:

- Protecting crops and livestock from pests and disease.
- Improving the quality and safety of agricultural products.
- Determining the best nutrition for people from infancy to old age.
- Sustaining our soil and other natural resources.
- Ensuring profitability for farmers and processors.
- Keeping costs down for consumers.
- Providing research support to other Federal agencies.

ARS research always targets specific problems threatening the Nation's food and fiber supplies, contributes to rural revitalization, and increases knowledge of human nutrition. ARS research also lays the foundation for future commercial development beneficial to all consumers.

The agency operates research facilities strategically located in major farm and rangeland ecosystems throughout the United States. This enables ARS to bring research expertise to bear on agricultural production and utilization problems of national scope from many different geographic vantage points.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: If you would like to submit comments, questions or provide general feedback on the ARS Web site, please access and submit the Feedback Form on the ARS Web site (<http://www.ars.usda.gov>; select "Contact Us" and "Feedback Form"). If you have specific USDA questions to which you would like a response from an expert, please access and submit an Ask the Expert form (<http://www.ars.usda.gov>; select "Contact Us" and "Ask The Expert Form"). Please remember that an e-mail address is required for a response.

Administering Agency: ARS Headquarters: Whitten Building, USDA, Room 302-A, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-3656; fax: 202-720-5427; Web site: <http://www.ars.usda.gov>). ARS Headquarters staff: George Washington Carver Center, USDA, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Beltsville, MD 20705.

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

The unique mission of USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities by supporting research, education, and extension partnerships in the land-grant university system and other partner organizations. Land-grant university partners are located in each State and Territory as well as the District of Columbia and include more than 130 colleges of agriculture; 59 agricultural experiment stations, with more than 9,500 scientists conducting research; 57 cooperative extension services, with more than 9,600 local extension agents working in 3,150 counties; 63 schools of forestry; 16 1890 Land-Grant Institutions (Historically Black Colleges) and Tuskegee University; 27 colleges of veterinary medicine; 42

schools and colleges of family and consumer sciences; 190 Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and 31 1994 Land-Grant Institutions (Tribal Colleges). The 31 Land-Grant Tribal Colleges are listed below.

The Land-Grant Tribal Colleges

Bay Mills Community
College
12214 West Lakeshore
Drive
Brimley, MI 49715
Telephone: 906-248-3354
Fax: 906-248-3351

Blackfeet Community
College
P.O. Box 819
Browning, MT 59417
Telephone: 406-338-7755
Fax: 406-338-3272

Cankdeska Cikana
Community College
P.O. Box 269
Fort Totten, ND 58335
Telephone: 701-766-4415
Fax: 701-766-4077

Chief Dull Knife College
P.O. Box 98
Lame Deer, MT 59043
Telephone: 406-477-6215
Fax: 406-477-6219

College of the Menominee
Nation
P.O. Box 1179
Keshena, WI 54135
Telephone: 715-799-4921
Fax: 715-799-1308

Crownpoint Institute of
Technology
P.O. Box 849
Crownpoint, NM 87313
Telephone: 505-786-4100
Fax: 505-786-5644

Diné College (formerly
Navajo Community
College)
P.O. Box 126
Tsaile, AZ 86556
Telephone: 928-724-6669
Fax: 928-724-3327

Fond du Lac Tribal and
Community College
2101 14th Street
Cloquet, MN 55720-2964
Telephone: 218-879-0800
Fax: 218-879-0814

Fort Belknap Community
College
P.O. Box 159
Harlem, MT 59526
Telephone: 406-353-2607
Fax: 406-353-2898

Fort Berthold Community
College
P.O. Box 490
New Town, ND 58763
Telephone: 701-627-4738
Fax: 701-627-3609

Fort Peck Community
College
P.O. Box 398
Poplar, MT 59255
Telephone: 406-768-6300
Fax: 406-768-6301

Haskell Indian Nations
University
155 Indian Avenue
Box 5030
Lawrence, KS 66046-4800
Telephone: 785-749-8404
Fax: 785-749-8411

Institute of American
Indian Arts
Box 20007
83 Avan Nu Po Road
Santa Fe, NM 87508
Telephone: 505-424-2300
Fax: 505-424-0050

Lac Courte Oreilles
Ojibwa Community
College
13466 W. Trepania Road
Hayward, WI 54843
Telephone: 715-634-4790
Fax: 715-634-5049

Leech Lake Tribal College
P.O. Box 180
Cass Lake, MN 56633
Telephone: 218-335-4200
Fax: 218-335-4209

Little Big Horn College
P.O. Box 370
Crow Agency, MT 59022
Telephone: 406-638-3100
Fax: 406-638-3169

Little Priest Tribal College
P.O. Box 270
Winnebago, NE 68071
Telephone: 402-878-2380
Fax: 402-878-2355

Nebraska Indian
Community College
P.O. Box 428
Macy, NE 68039
Telephone: 402-837-5078
Fax: 402-837-4183

Northwest Indian College
2522 Kwina Road
Bellingham, WA 98226
Telephone: 360-676-2772
Fax: 360-738-0136

Oglala Lakota College
P.O. Box 490
490 Piya Wiconi Road
Kyle, SD 57752
Telephone: 605-455-6000
Fax: 605-455-2787

Saginaw Chippewa Tribal
College
2274 Enterprise Drive
Mount Pleasant, MI 48858
Telephone: 989-775-4123
Fax: 989-775-4528

Salish Kootenai College
P.O. Box 117
Pablo, MT 59855
Telephone: 406-275-4800
Fax: 406-275-4801

Sinte Gleska University
205 Main Street
Mission, SD 57555
Telephone: 605-856-5880
Fax: 605-856-5401

Sisseton Wahpeton
Community College
P.O. Box 689
Sisseton, SD 57262
Telephone: 605-698-3966
Fax: 605-698-3132

Sitting Bull College
1341 92nd Street
Fort Yates, ND 58538
Telephone: 701-854-3861
Fax: 701-854-3403

Southwestern Indian
Polytechnic Institute
P.O. Box 10146
Albuquerque, NM 87184
Telephone: 505-346-2347
Fax: 505-346-2343

Stone Child College
RRI, Box 1082
Box Elder, MT 59521
Telephone: 406-395-4875
Fax: 406-395-4836

Tohono O'odham
Community College
P.O. Box 3129
Sells, AZ 85634
Telephone: 520-383-8401
Fax: 520-383-0029

Turtle Mountain
Community College
P.O. Box 340
Belcourt, ND 58316
Telephone: 701-477-7862
Fax: 701-477-7807

United Tribes Technical
College
3315 University Drive
Bismarck, ND 58504
Telephone: 701-255-3285
Fax: 701-530-0605

White Earth Tribal and
Community College
210 Main Street South
P.O. Box 478
Mahnomon, MN 56557
Telephone: 218-935-0417
Fax: 218-935-0708

CSREES has target areas of interest in 59 identified programs that are grouped in the following National Emphasis Areas:

- Agricultural and Food Biosecurity
- Agricultural Systems
- Animals and Animal Products
- Biotechnology and Genomics
- Economics and Commerce
- Families, Youth and Communities
- Food, Nutrition and Health
- Natural Resources and Environment
- Pest Management
- Plants and Plant Products
- Technology and Engineering

CSREES Program Tools

CSREES is the Federal partner in a vast network of thousands of scientists, educators, and extension staff and volunteers who execute its programs throughout the United States, its territories, and beyond. Most of these partners work at or through land-grant colleges and universities.

Starting in 1862, the Federal Government granted federally owned land (hence the name “land-grant”) to each State for the development of a university that would serve the citizens of the State by providing agricultural and technical education. Other land-grant universities were designated in 1890 (historically African American institutions) and in 1994 (Native American institutions).

While nearly all universities have research and education as their core responsibilities, land-grant universities have a third critical mission—extension. “Extension” means “reaching out,” and along with teaching and research, land-grant institutions extend their resources, addressing public needs with college or university resources through nonformal, noncredit programs.

Below are descriptions of primary CSREES programs. For more information on any of these programs, visit the CSREES Web site (<http://www.csrees.usda.gov>) or contact your State or tribal land-grant institution. You may also contact your local Cooperative Extension office (check the county government listings in your telephone book).

Cooperative Extension Programs

Cooperative extension is a nationwide educational network that brings the research and knowledge of land-grant institutions to people in their homes, workplaces, and communities. Extension links the resources and expertise of county extension offices, land-grant colleges and universities, and the Federal Government.

Extension educators deliver research-based programs through workshops, home-study courses, Web-based curricula, and other methods. The programs are designed to advance knowledge of

agriculture and to enhance community resource and economic development; family development and resource management; 4-H and youth development; leadership and volunteer development; natural resources and environmental management; and nutrition, diet, and health. The emphasis of Extension programs is on enabling learners to modify behaviors in line with learner-identified goals.

The *Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program* (formally the Extension Indian Reservation Program) supports extension education on Indian reservations and tribal jurisdictions to address the unique needs and problems of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal nations. The target audience is Native American individuals and communities on large reservations.

This program assists American Indians in adopting profitable farming and ranching techniques; enhancing the protection and safety of the Nation's food supply, natural resources, and environment; improving nutrition and health; and providing 4-H and other developmental experiences for tribal youth. In each State, the land-grant university supplies qualified extension agents who bring educational programs and resources to tribal communities, and the tribal nation provides office space and utilities.

A local advisory committee works with the agent to identify community priorities. Agents often live on the reservations, sharing daily experiences with their neighbors. Agents also meet annually to discuss their successes, share program ideas, and investigate additional sources of program support.

Funding for Extension activities at the 1994 Institutions (*Tribal Colleges Extension Program*) is available through a competitive application process. Current projects are working to improve health through nutrition and traditional foods programs, to enhance the tribal agricultural producers' economy, to develop youth leaders, to enhance stewardship of natural resources, and to enhance family and community development.

Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grants Program

The Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grants Program enhances educational opportunities for Native Americans by strengthening instructional programs in the food and agricultural sciences. Funds are awarded equally among the 1994 land-grant institutions upon approval of each institution's application for a grant, including a plan of work related to each institution's long-range goals.

Tribal Colleges Endowment Fund

The Tribal Colleges Endowment Fund benefits the 1994 land-grant institutions by promoting capacity development in teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences. The Tribal Colleges Endowment Fund, as a teaching capacity development program, is a companion to the Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grants Program. It differs primarily from the Education Equity Grants Program in two respects: (1) Endowment funds may be escrowed indefinitely and used for major obligations relating to the allowable activities and (2) since October 1, 2001, Endowment funds have been able to be used for facility renovation, repair, construction, and maintenance in support of and in addition to specific targeted areas of support.

Targeted areas of support include curricula design and instructional materials development; faculty development and preparation for teaching; instruction delivery systems; student experiential learning; equipment and instrumentation for teaching; and student recruitment and retention. Only 1994 land-grant institutions are eligible to receive funds under this program.

Tribal College Research Grants Program

The Tribal College Research Grants Program assists the 1994 land-grant institutions in conducting agricultural research that addresses high-priority concerns of tribal, national, or multistate significance. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis.

Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program

The Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving (ANNH) Institutions Education Grants Program promotes and strengthens the ability of these institutions to carry out education, applied research, and related community development programs within a broadly defined arena of food and agricultural sciences. The ANNH program aims to attract, retain, and graduate outstanding students capable of enhancing the Nation's food and agricultural scientific and professional workforce.

Projects may involve individual institutions, consortia, or cooperative initiatives between two or more ANNH institutions or with other colleges and universities, units of government, or the private sector. Targeted areas of support include curriculum design, materials development, and library resources; faculty preparation and enhancement of teaching; instruction delivery systems; scientific instrumentation for teaching and research; student experiential learning; student recruitment, retention, and educational equity (including the provision of student financial assistance); applied studies in the food and agricultural sciences; applied research support systems; technology delivery systems; and other applied research and community development applications.

Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Competitive Grants Program

The Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Competitive Grants Program (also known as the 2501 Program) provides funds to organizations to conduct outreach and technical assistance in order to encourage and assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to own and operate farms and ranches and to participate in agricultural programs. The program supports a wide range of outreach and assistance activities in farm management, financial management, marketing, application and bidding procedures, and other areas.

The primary purpose of the program is to deliver outreach and technical assistance to assure opportunities for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to successfully acquire, own, operate, and retain farms and ranches and to assure equitable participation in the full range of USDA programs. Institutions and organizations eligible to apply include 1862 Land-Grant Institutions; 1890 Land-Grant Institutions; 1994 Land-Grant Institutions; Hispanic-serving institutions; Native American Tribal Governments (federally recognized); Native American tribal organizations (not federally recognized Tribal Governments); nonprofits with 501(c)(3)

IRS status, other than institutions of higher education; nonprofits without 501(c)(3) IRS status, other than institutions of higher education; State-controlled institutions of higher education; postsecondary educational institutions; and community-based organizations, networks, or coalitions of community-based organizations that meet certain criteria.

National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program

The National Research Initiative (NRI) is the office in CSREES charged with funding research on key problems of national and regional importance in the biological, environmental, physical, and social sciences relevant to agriculture, food, the environment, and communities on a peer-reviewed, competitive basis. To address these problems, NRI advances fundamental scientific knowledge in support of agriculture and coordinates opportunities to build on these scientific findings. The resulting new scientific and technological discoveries then necessitate efforts in education and extension to deliver science-based knowledge to people, allowing informed practical decisions.

The NRI supports a spectrum of research that bridges the basic and applied sciences and results in practical outcomes. From its inception, the NRI has supported projects for fundamental and applied research, and in fiscal year 2004 CSREES was given the authority to use up to 20 percent of the available NRI funds to carry out a competitive grants program for projects combining research, education, and/or extension, termed “integrated projects.”

The competition is open to scientists at all academic institutions, Federal research agencies, and private and industrial organizations. It is also open to scientists as individuals.

National Water Quality Program

The goal of the CSREES National Water Quality Program (NWQP) is to protect or improve the quality of water resources throughout the United States and its territories, particularly in agriculturally managed watersheds. The program seeks to address this goal at the national, regional, State, and local levels.

NWQP brings university scientists, instructors, and extension educators into more effective and efficient partnerships with Federal interagency priority programs to address water quality issues in U.S. agriculture. A key emphasis of the program is the integration of extension, research, and educational resources to solve water quality problems at the local level. The program is guided by a unique model for shared leadership that includes representatives from each of 10 regional projects (Environmental Protection Agency regions) and representatives from 1890 and 1994 institutions as well as the CSREES National Program Leader for Water Quality.

A collaborative effort with representatives of land-grant universities and colleges has identified eight key “themes” that represent critical challenges affecting the quality of our Nation’s water resources in agricultural and rural watersheds. These themes are:

- Animal manure management
- Drinking water and human health

- Environmental restoration
- Nutrient and pesticide management
- Pollution assessment and prevention
- Water management and conservation
- Water policy and economics
- Watershed management

The Small Business Innovation Research Program

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program makes competitively awarded grants to qualified small businesses to support high-quality, advanced-concepts research on important scientific problems and opportunities in agriculture that could lead to significant public benefit, if successful.

The objectives of the SBIR Program are to:

- Stimulate technological innovations in the private sector.
- Strengthen the role of small businesses in meeting Federal research and development needs.
- Increase private sector commercialization of innovations derived from USDA-supported research and development efforts.
- Foster and encourage participation by women-owned and socially and economically disadvantaged small business firms in technological innovations.

SBIR research topics are as follows:

- Forests and related resources
- Plant production and protection—biology
- Animal production and protection
- Soil and water resources
- Food science and nutrition
- Rural and community development
- Aquaculture
- Industrial applications
- Marketing and trade
- Animal manure management
- Small and mid-size farms
- Plant production and protection—engineering

The SBIR program office directs all activities required under the SBIR law and executes the policy established by the Small Business Administration. CSREES exclusively administers the SBIR program at USDA.

SBIR program awards are based on the scientific and technical merit of investigator-initiated ideas. The SBIR Program does not make loans and does not grant awards for the purpose of helping a business get established.

SBIR Phase I grants are limited to \$80,000 and a duration of 8 months. SBIR Phase II grants are limited to \$350,000 and a duration of 24 months (with no gap in funding between Phase I and Phase II). SBIR program funds are allocated in proportion to the number of proposals received over 12 broad topic areas. Proposals are reviewed through a confidential peer review process using outside experts from nonprofit organizations. All applicants receive verbatim copies of reviews.

For additional information, visit the SBIR Web site (<http://www.reeusda.gov/sbir>), or contact Dr. Charles Cleland, SBIR National Program Manager, CSREES/USDA, Stop 2243, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2243 (telephone: 202-401-4002; fax: 202-401-6070; e-mail: ccleland@csrees.usda.gov).

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: For more information on any of these programs, visit the CSREES Web site (<http://www.csrees.usda.gov>) or contact your State or tribal land-grant institution. You may also contact your local Cooperative Extension office (check the county government listings in your telephone book).

Administering Agency: Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 2201, Washington, DC 20250-2201; telephone: 202-720-7441; Web site: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov>).

Economic Research Service

The Economic Research Service (ERS) provides economic analysis on efficiency, efficacy, and equity issues in agriculture, food, the environment, and rural development to improve public and private decisionmaking. ERS economic analysis is shaped primarily for use in the decisionmaking process by policymakers, though the ultimate beneficiaries of informed public and private decisionmaking are the American people.

ERS is the main source of economic information and research from USDA. Located in Washington, D.C., with approximately 450 employees, ERS produces information and analysis for use by the general public and to help executive and legislative branches develop, administer, and evaluate agricultural and rural policies and programs.

ERS publications cover a wide variety of topics, including policies that affect farmers and the population of rural America. In addition to studies on rural America as a whole, ERS has focused on American Indian and Alaska Native demography, the state of American Indian farming, and the history of American Indian contributions to American agriculture.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: For additional information on ERS, visit the ERS Web site (<http://www.ers.usda.gov>). For information on ERS products, services, and subject specialists or for help in finding a report, contact the ERS Information Center (e-mail: InfoCenter@ers.usda.gov; telephone: 202-694-5050). To order ERS publications and other products, call the USDA Order Desk (1-800-999-6779).

Administering Agency: Economic Research Service, USDA, 1800 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-5831; telephone: 202-694-5000; fax: 202-694-5757; Web site: <http://www.ers.usda.gov>).

National Agricultural Library

As the Nation's primary source for agricultural information, the National Agricultural Library (NAL) has a mission to increase the availability and utilization of agricultural information for researchers, educators, policymakers, consumers of agricultural products, and the public. The Library is one of the world's largest and most accessible agricultural research libraries and plays a vital role in supporting research, education, and applied agriculture.

The National Agricultural Library ensures and enhances access to agricultural information for a better quality of life. The mission of the National Agricultural Library is as follows:

- Serve as a National Library of the United States and as the Library of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- Acquire, organize, manage, preserve, and provide access to information and provide quality stewardship of its unique collection.
- Assist, train, and educate people according to their information needs.
- Provide leadership in information management.
- Maximize access to information through collaborative efforts and utilization of technology.
- Enhance global cooperation through international exchange of information and the provision of services and technical assistance.

The National Agricultural Library was created as the departmental library for USDA in 1862 and became a national library in 1962. One of four national libraries of the United States (with the

Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, and the National Library of Education), it also coordinates a national network of State land-grant and USDA field libraries.

In an international role, the National Agricultural Library serves as the U.S. center for the international agricultural information system, coordinating and sharing resources and enhancing global access to agricultural data. The National Agricultural Library's collection of more than 3.3 million items and its leadership role in information services and technology applications combine to make it the foremost agricultural library in the world. NAL works to make a difference and to enrich the lives of people everywhere.

National Agricultural Statistics Service

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) serves the basic agricultural and rural data needs of the people of the United States, including agricultural workers and rural residents, by objectively providing important, usable, and accurate statistical information and services needed to make informed decisions. NASS statistics keep those involved with America's agriculture well informed, provide the basic information necessary to keep agricultural markets stable and efficient, and help maintain a "level playing field" for all users of agricultural statistics.

Through NASS, American agriculture is continually counted, measured, priced, analyzed, and reported to provide the facts needed by people working throughout this vast industry. The employees of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service conduct hundreds of surveys and prepare reports covering virtually every facet of U.S. agriculture—for example, production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, and farm aspects of the industry. In addition, NASS's 46 field offices publish data about many of the same topics for local audiences.

NASS publications cover a wide range of subjects, from traditional crops such as corn and wheat to specialties such as mushrooms and flowers; from calves born to hogs slaughtered; and from agricultural prices to land in farms. The abundance of information produced has earned NASS employees the title, "The Fact Finders of Agriculture."

Census Coverage of American Indian Farmers and Ranchers

Every 5 years, NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture, providing a source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data at the national, State, and local levels. NASS has done considerable list-building to increase census coverage of American Indian farmers and ranchers who operate land off reservations. In addition, NASS received a recommendation from the Secretary of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics to collect more complete reservation-level data on the 2002 census.

In response to this recommendation and to honor a commitment to publish improved demographic data on American Indian operators, NASS conducted the 2002 Census of Agriculture pilot project in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. These States were selected for the pilot project because there is a significant amount of agricultural production on

their reservations. Also, the reservation agriculture is similar in size, type, and operating arrangements to nonreservation agriculture. The data will be used by NASS to develop future plans for providing more complete American Indian reservation agricultural statistics records.

A new section has been added to the census report form for farm and ranch operators to self-report agricultural activity on American Indian reservations. NASS will also continue to implement special procedures to account for American Indian farm and ranch operators on tribal lands. In addition to collecting total agricultural production information data from the reservation headquarters, NASS will also collect data on the number of individual farm operations that are on the reservations.

Previously, the census of agriculture included data showing only the number of American Indians operating farms and ranches located off the reservations. Each reservation was normally counted as a single-farm operation. Thus, the count of American Indian operators has traditionally been seriously understated. The current procedures will provide more complete agricultural statistics on American Indian farms and ranches, and soon all American Indians engaged in agriculture will be fully accounted for in the census.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: For additional information, see the National Agricultural Statistics Service Web site (<http://www.nass.usda.gov>), visit the NASS Customer Service Center at USDA, Room 5038, South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250; call the toll-free Agricultural Statistics Hotline (800-727-9540); or e-mail NASS (NASS@NASS.usda.gov).

Administering Agency: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-6643; Web site: <http://www.nass.usda.gov>).

8. Marketing and Regulatory Programs

The USDA Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) mission area facilitates domestic and international marketing of U.S. agricultural products and strives to ensure the health and care of animals and plants. MRP agencies are active participants in setting national and international standards with broad responsibility for assisting and protecting agriculture and our Nation's food supply. These agencies safeguard our animals (including wildlife), crops, and environment from pests, diseases, or other harmful agents; monitor the agricultural marketing system; ensure fair trade practices; and assure value and quality in agricultural products that are bought and sold.

MRP programs strive to meet tribal expectations for improved and fair marketing competitiveness for their agricultural products and protect the Nation's agricultural resources by keeping foreign pests and diseases out of the country, minimizing damage caused by wildlife, and protecting certain animals from inhumane treatment. The effects of the efforts of these agencies can be seen in the wholesome, affordable foods we buy at the grocery store; in the ships that leave American ports filled with U.S. grain that feeds the world; and, even at the airport, where MRP works with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to intercept prohibited products and thus to protect us from pest and disease contamination from outside our borders.

Three agencies comprise the MRP mission area: the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA). These agencies are committed to facilitating the marketing of U.S. agricultural products and are dedicated to working with their customers to meet their needs and to better serve American agriculture.

Working With Native Americans and Alaska Natives

USDA recognizes the historic and continuing rights of sovereign tribal governments to govern themselves and manage their resources, and it directs its agencies to meet their responsibilities toward tribal governments. MRP agencies are committed to building day-to-day working relationships with Native American governments and to respecting tribal heritage and cultural values in planning and initiating their programs.

AMS, APHIS, and GIPSA acknowledge their obligations under treaties and statutes to protect and maintain the lands, resources, and traditional use areas of American Indians and Alaska Natives. This includes retaining utilization of and access to off-reservation lands and natural resources by American Indians for purposes of hunting, gathering food and cultural and medicinal plants, grazing livestock on open and unclaimed lands, and fishing in usual and customary places. MRP officials work cooperatively with tribal governments and other Federal agencies, program areas, and departments as well as with State and local organizations to enlist interest and support in efforts that are mutually beneficial to all parties involved.

Over the years, program specialists have established and maintained networking systems to better consult with Native American leaders about tribal concerns and needs. Managers and program coordinators within all three MRP agencies consider the impact of decisions on tribal

trust resources and consult with tribal governments to ensure that tribal rights, issues, and concerns are factored in during the development of projects, programs, and policies.

Agricultural Marketing Service

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) includes six commodity programs—Cotton, Dairy, Fruit and Vegetable, Livestock and Seed, Poultry, and Tobacco. The programs employ specialists who provide standardization, grading, and market news services for those commodities. They also enforce such Federal laws as the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act and the Federal Seed Act.

AMS commodity programs oversee marketing agreements and orders, administer research and promotion programs, and purchase commodities for Federal food programs, including over \$4 million for bison purchases from tribal producers. The agency also administers a program involving financial grants to States and tribes for marketing improvements.

In addition, AMS assists in the planning and design of marketing facilities, processes, and methods in cooperation with State, tribal, and local governments; universities; farmer groups; and other segments of the U.S. food industry. This program enhances the overall effectiveness of the food marketing system, provides better quality products to the consumer at reasonable cost, improves market access for growers with small- to medium-sized farms, and promotes regional economic development.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: Lloyd C. Day, Administrator (telephone: 202-720-5115; e-mail: lloyd.day@usda.gov) or Kenneth C. Clayton, Associate Administrator (telephone: 202-720-4276; e-mail: Kenneth.Clayton@usda.gov). To learn more about the AMS Civil Rights Program, contact Ruihong Guo (telephone: 202-720-0583; e-mail: ruihong.guo@usda.gov). For additional staff contacts, visit the AMS Web site (<http://www.ams.usda.gov>) and select “Contact Us” or access the organizational chart directly (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/admin/amsorg.htm>). For questions or comments on the Web page, contact the AMS Webmaster (AMSWebmaster@usda.gov).

Administering Agency: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-5115; Web site: <http://www.ams.usda.gov>).

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is an action-oriented agency that works with other Federal agencies, Congress, States, Indian tribes, agricultural interests, and the general public to carry out its mission of providing an umbrella of protection for the Nation’s plant and animal resources. APHIS is responsible for protecting and promoting U.S. agricultural health, administering the Animal Welfare Act, and carrying out wildlife damage management activities. The agency accomplishes its mission through the efforts of six diverse field programs:

Animal Care, Biotechnology Regulatory Services, International Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Veterinary Services, and Wildlife Services.

In recent years, the scope of APHIS' protective function has expanded beyond traditional pest and disease management. While APHIS has always demonstrated its technical expertise and leadership in assessing and regulating the risks associated with agricultural imports, the agency now has assumed an even greater role in the global agricultural arena.

APHIS uses its scientific resources to respond to other countries' animal and plant health import requirements and to negotiate science-based standards. The agency addresses sanitary and phytosanitary trade barriers to ensure that America's agricultural exports, worth more than \$62 billion annually, are protected from unjustified trade restrictions.

Additionally, in response to needs expressed by the American people and Congress, APHIS' protection role also includes wildlife damage management, the welfare of animals, human health and safety, and protection of ecosystems vulnerable to invasive pests and pathogens. Finally, APHIS ensures that biotechnology-derived agricultural products are safe for release into the environment.

As of July 2005, APHIS employed 8,225 people with a wide range of scientific, technical, and administrative skills working in all 50 States, several Territories, and some 37 countries around the world. The agency's workforce is organized into six operational program units, three management support units, the Office of Civil Rights, and the Office for Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

APHIS expended more than \$1.34 billion in fiscal year 2005 to carry out its mission. The bulk of the agency's funding comes from Congressional appropriations. The agency also receives funding through other sources, including user fees, cooperative agreements, and international trust fund arrangements.

For additional information on any APHIS program, contact your local APHIS office. APHIS offices are generally listed in the blue pages of the telephone book under the Federal Government, the U.S. Department of Agriculture. You may also contact anyone on the list of APHIS Native American Working Group State Representatives or write to USDA, APHIS, Native American Working Group, 12345 W. Alameda Parkway, Suite 204, Lakewood, CO 80228. You can visit the APHIS Web site at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> (where the list of State Representatives is displayed) or e-mail APHIS (APHIS.Web@aphis.usda.gov).

Like all USDA agencies, APHIS acknowledges the historic and continuing rights of sovereign tribal governments to govern themselves and manage their resources. Agency officials work cooperatively with tribal governments, other Federal agencies and departments, and State and local organizations to enlist their interest and support in mutually beneficial efforts for all parties involved. APHIS managers and coordinators also consult with Native American leaders about tribal concerns and needs in relation to agency policies and activities.

Native American Working Group

APHIS has several ongoing programs with Indian tribes that focus on agriculture or on the protection of natural resources, facilities, or human health and safety. To enhance its program delivery, APHIS has chartered the APHIS Native American Working Group (ANAWG). The ANAWG recommends, develops, and implements policies and activities designed to increase the delivery of program services and to facilitate active partnerships with American Indian tribes, committees, and organizations.

ANAWG has representatives from all APHIS program areas. The group provides assistance and advice to the existing APHIS programs and advises APHIS' top management about ways to enhance program delivery and accessibility to tribes, intertribal committees, and related organizations. ANAWG functions under the direction of the APHIS Administrator, who retains authority for establishing agency policy relating to all APHIS activities and programs of interest to Native Americans. The Chair of ANAWG sits on USDA's Native American Working Group.

Additional information is available on the ANAWG Web site (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/anawg>).

Primary APHIS Programs

Animal Care

Animal Care administers the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Horse Protection Act (HPA). The AWA helps ensure the humane care and treatment of animals used in research, exhibited to the public, and transported by common carriers. The Act also regulates pets at the wholesale (breeder) level and dealers who sell animals at auctions.

The AWA requires that minimum standards of care and treatment be provided for most warmblooded animals bred for commercial sale, used in research, transported commercially, or exhibited to the public. This includes animals exhibited in zoos, circuses, and marine-mammal facilities as well as pets transported on commercial airlines. The AWA also prohibits staged dogfights, cock fighting, bear and raccoon baiting, and similar animal fighting ventures.

The Horse Protection Act ensures that trainers of gaited horses, such as Tennessee Walkers, do not use painful and cruel methods, called soring, to condition their horses to display the accentuated gait known as the "Big Lick."

For additional information, contact Animal Care, USDA/APHIS/AC, 4700 River Road, Unit 84, Riverdale, MD 20737-1234 (telephone: 301-734-7833; fax: 301-734-4978; e-mail: ace@aphis.usda.gov).

Biotechnology Regulatory Services

Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) regulates the field testing, movement, and importation of genetically engineered organisms that are known to be, or could be, plant pests. BRS issues various types of permits for each of these activities. BRS also evaluates petitions for deregulation to ensure that products being considered for removal from regulation do not pose a threat to U.S.

agricultural or environmental health. For more information, visit the BRS Web site (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/brs>).

For additional information, contact Biotechnology Regulatory Services, USDA/APHIS/BRS, Unit 147, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737 (telephone: 301-734-5301; e-mail: biotechquery@aphis.usda.gov).

International Services

International Services works outside the United States to protect U.S. agriculture and enhance agricultural trade. The unit maintains a comprehensive information network, exchanges technical information, and provides expertise to foreign governments and international groups.

In addition, International Services negotiates with foreign agricultural officials concerning entry requirements for U.S. agricultural products; conducts cooperative agricultural pest and disease programs in foreign locations; and manages preclearance programs for agricultural products shipped to the United States.

For additional information, contact International Services, USDA/APHIS/IS, Stop 3432, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250.

Plant Protection and Quarantine

APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) unit protects the Nation's agricultural and natural resources from the risks associated with the entry, establishment, or spread of animal and plant pests, diseases, pathogens, and noxious weeds. PPQ's team of scientists, program specialists, and support personnel executes its complex mission through various means, including collection and analysis of pest data, both in the mainland United States and offshore; surveying for and detecting exotic pests and diseases in the United States; developing quarantine policies and regulatory requirements for agriculture commodities and plant resources; inspecting propagative plant materials for importation; and responding to plant health threats. In addition, the unit develops plant health regulations and oversees their enforcement by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection agency at airports, seaports, and border check stations.

PPQ assists American farmers and exporters by providing phytosanitary inspection and certification for plants and plant products being shipped to foreign countries. These phytosanitary certificates, as required by the importing country, certify that the products are pest and disease free. The unit also helps to maintain and expand market access for U.S. farmers and exporters by engaging in trade negotiations with foreign nations.

As the lead program for detecting and responding to new plant pests introduced from other countries, PPQ works to develop emergency response capacity and cooperation with States and tribes in the event of a new serious plant pest introduction. For plant pests of limited distribution within the United States, PPQ works with States and tribes to help ensure that plant pests are contained or controlled to protect other areas of the country.

PPQ's Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST) provides scientific support for PPQ. CPHST develops state-of-the-art technologies for detecting, identifying, and mitigating risks of exotic pests. In addition, CPHST leads PPQ's scientific research activities in areas such as pest detection, molecular diagnostics, risk assessment, mass-rearing of sterilized insects, and integrated pest management, including biological control.

For additional information, visit the PPQ Web site (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq>); or contact APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine by telephone (Emergencies: 301-734-8247; Pest Detection: 301-734-8717; Pest Programs: 301-734-0771; Smuggling: 970-494-7510 [Western Region] or 919-855-7342 [Eastern Region]; Cargo Inspection Policy or Treatment: 301-734-8295; Commodity Preclearance: 301-734-4910; Permits: 301-734-0841) or e-mail (APHIS.Web@aphis.usda.gov).

Veterinary Services

Veterinary Services (VS) protects the health of the Nation's livestock, aquaculture, and poultry resources by regulating the entry of imported animals and animal products. The unit is prepared to take emergency action against foreign diseases and, with the States and tribes, operates eradication programs for domestic animal diseases. VS provide health certification for exported animals and animal products and also conducts diagnostic tests and issues licenses for veterinary biological products and manufacturers.

People benefit from the work of VS in a variety of ways. Improvements in animal health, for example, provide consumers with plentiful, safe supplies of animal products at reasonable prices. Licensed and inspected veterinary biologics manufacturers assure animal owners that vaccines for their animals will be available and effective.

VS has been working actively with tribes for several years to develop effective programs of animal health monitoring and protection. This has been done with concerted efforts to train tribal officials and producers on animal health issues and management—in developing Memoranda of Understanding with tribes to assist in animal health emergencies and other programs, developing Emergency Response planning procedures and plans, and in monitoring and controlling specific diseases. As part of these efforts, VS has initiated a pilot Tribal Cooperative Veterinarian program with three tribes in the Southwest to improve surveillance and monitoring for diseases on tribal lands and to assist the tribes in achieving their animal health goals.

For additional information, visit the VS Web site (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs>); or contact APHIS Veterinary Services (Animal-Related Issues—telephone: 301-734-8364; fax: 301-734-4704; Importing Animal Products—telephone: 301-734-3277; fax: 301-734-8226; Exporting Animal Products—telephone: 301-734-3278; fax: 301-734-0571; Importing and Exporting Live Animals—telephone: 301-734-8364; Select Agents and Organisms and Vectors—telephone: 301-734-5960; fax: 301-734-3652; Regionalization and International Trade Negotiations—telephone: 301-734-734-4356; fax: 301-734-3222; or Sanitary International Standards—telephone: 301-734-5324; fax: 301-734-8818) or e-mail (APHIS.Web@aphis.usda.gov).

Wildlife Services

Wildlife Services works to reduce wildlife damage to agriculture and natural resources, minimize potential wildlife threats to human health and safety, and protect threatened and endangered species. The unit cooperates with tribal governments, foreign governments, international organizations, and other governmental and private organizations on animal and bird damage and nuisance control.

Wildlife is a valuable natural resource enjoyed by Americans across the Nation. But as increased urbanization leads to a reduction in wildlife habitat and as wildlife populations continue to expand, conflicts between people and wildlife are all too frequent. Wildlife can destroy crops; kill livestock; damage property and natural resources; and pose serious risks to public health and safety. Wildlife Services provides Federal leadership and expertise to resolve these conflicts and create a balance that allows people and wildlife to coexist peacefully. With incidents of wildlife damage on the rise, the knowledge and skills of Wildlife Services personnel are constantly in demand.

Wildlife Services has established strong relationships with many tribes and has Memoranda of Understanding with these tribes for assistance with specific programs and a focus to achieve tribal goals. These include training tribal officials in animal handling techniques; disease monitoring and protection programs for tribal wildlife and feral animals; and cooperatively hiring employees to work for both the tribe and APHIS to build stronger relationships.

For additional information, visit the Wildlife Services Web site (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws>) or contact APHIS Wildlife Services (USDA/APHIS/WS, 4700 River Road, Unit 87, Riverdale, MD 20737).

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 312-E, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-3668; Web site: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>).

Administering Agency: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 312-E, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, Washington, DC 20250 (telephone: 202-720-3668; e-mail: APHIS.Web@aphis.usda.gov).

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) facilitates the marketing of livestock, poultry, meat, cereals, oilseeds, and related agricultural products and promotes fair and competitive trading practices for the overall benefit of consumers and American agriculture.

As a part of the Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission area, GIPSA is helping to ensure a productive and competitive global marketplace for U.S. agricultural products. As an impartial,

third-party entity, GIPSA helps ensure a fair and competitive marketing system for all involved in the merchandising of grain and related products, livestock, meat, and poultry.

Federal Grain Inspection Service

GIPSA's Federal Grain Inspection Service helps move our Nation's harvest into the marketplace by providing farmers, handlers, processors, exporters, and international buyers with sampling, inspection, process verification, weighing, and stowage examination services that accurately and consistently describe the quality and quantity of the commodities being bought and sold.

GIPSA facilitates the marketing of U.S. grain and related agricultural products by establishing standards for quality assessments, regulating handling practices, and managing a network of Federal, State, and private laboratories that provide impartial, user-fee-funded, official inspection and weighing services.

Packers and Stockyards Program

GIPSA's Packers and Stockyards Program (P&SP) administers the Packers and Stockyards Act (P&S Act) to promote fair and competitive marketing in livestock, meat, and poultry for the benefit of consumers and American agriculture. The P&S Act is intended to protect producers, other market participants, and consumers from unfair, discriminatory, fraudulent, or deceptive practices that might be carried out by those subject to the Act.

Additional Information

Whom To Contact: Administrator, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Stop 3601, Room 2055, South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3601 (telephone: 202-720-0219). To report violations, call the Violation Hotline (1-800-998-3447).

Administering Agency: Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 2055, South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3601 (telephone: 202-720-0219; Web site: <http://www.gipsa.usda.gov>).

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Executive Memorandum

The White House Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 23, 2004

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Government-to-Government Relationship with Tribal Governments

The United States has a unique legal and political relationship with Indian tribes and a special relationship with Alaska Native entities as provided in the Constitution of the United States, treaties, and Federal statutes. Presidents for decades have recognized this relationship. President Nixon announced a national policy of self-determination for Indian tribes in 1970. More recently, Executive Order 13175, entitled Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, was issued in 2000. I reiterated my Administration's adherence to a government-to-government relationship and support for tribal sovereignty and self-determination earlier this year in Executive Order 13336, entitled American Indian and Alaska Native Education.

My Administration is committed to continuing to work with federally recognized tribal governments on a government-to-government basis and strongly supports and respects tribal sovereignty and self-determination for tribal governments in the United States. I take pride in acknowledging and reaffirming the existence and durability of our unique government-to-government relationship and these abiding principles.

This commitment begins at the White House, where my Director of Intergovernmental Affairs serves as my White House liaison with all Indian nations and works with federally recognized tribal governments on an intergovernmental basis. Moreover, it is critical that all departments and agencies adhere to these principles and work with tribal governments in a manner that cultivates mutual respect and fosters greater understanding to reinforce these principles.

Accordingly, the head of each executive department and agency (agency) shall continue to ensure to the greatest extent practicable and as permitted by United States law that the agency's working relationship with federally recognized tribal governments fully respects the rights of self-government and self-determination due tribal governments. Department or agency inquiries regarding this memorandum, specifically those related to regulatory, legislative, or budgetary issues, should be directed to the Office of Management and Budget.

This memorandum is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to, and does not, create any right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by a party against the United States, its agencies, entities, or instrumentalities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Appendix 2

Departmental Regulation 1340-006

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Washington, D.C. 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		Number: 1340-006
SUBJECT: Policies on American Indians and Alaska Natives	DATE: October 16, 1992	
	OPI: Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of Public Affairs	

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to outline the policies of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in its interactions with Indians, Alaska Natives, tribal governments, and Alaska Native Corporations (ANC). USDA policies are based on and are coextensive with Federal treaties and law. These policies pertain to Federally recognized Tribes and ANCS, as appropriate, and provide guidance to USDA personnel for actions affecting Indians and Alaska Natives. These policies do not involve USDA interactions with State-recognized Tribes, Indians, or Alaska Natives who are not members of Tribes with respect to matters provided for by statute or regulation.

2 DEFINITIONS

- a Indian tribe (or tribe). Any Indian tribe, band, nation, Pueblo, or other organized group or community which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.
- b Alaska Native Corporation. Any Alaska Native village or regional corporation established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, Pub. L. No. 92-203 (ANCSA).
- c Indian. A member of an Indian tribe.
- d Alaska Native. As defined by section 3(b) of ANCSA, a citizen of the United States who is a person of one-fourth degree or more Alaska Indian (including Tsimshian Indians not enrolled in the Metlakla Indian Community) Eskimo, or Aleut blood, or a combination thereof. The term includes any Native as so

defined either or both of whose adoptive parents are not Natives. It also includes, in the absence of proof of a minimum of blood quantum, any citizen of the United States who is regarded as an, Alaska Native by the Native village or Native group of which he/she claims to be a member of whose father or mother is (or, if deceased, was) regarded as Native by any village or group.

e Tribal government. The governing body of an Indian tribe that has been officially recognized as such by the Federal Government.

3 BACKGROUND

The United States Government has a unique, legal and political relationship with Indians and their tribal governments as defined through treaties, statutes, court decisions, and the United States Constitution. The United States Government has obligations under treaties and statutes to protect and maintain the lands, resources, and traditional use areas of Indians. Tribal governments have powers similar to those of State governments. In Alaska, the relationship with ANCs is defined by ANCSA, as amended.

4 POLICIES

a USDA is the lead agency of the Federal Government for providing effective and efficient coordination of Federal agricultural and rural development programs. USDA recognizes that Indians possess the right to govern themselves and manage their resources. Therefore, USDA supports and seeks to further the principles of self-governance as delineated in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975.

b Consistent with applicable law, USDA officials will consult with tribal governments and ANCs regarding the influence of USDA activities on water, land, forest, air, and other natural resources of tribal governments and ANCS.

c USDA recognizes that tribal governments and ANCs manage land for such agricultural activities as farming, grazing, hunting, fishing, subsistence agriculture, and gathering of plants, animals, and plant products. USDA further recognizes that such resources may hold a unique meaning in the spiritual as well as everyday lifeways of many Indians and Alaska Natives. Consistent with applicable law, USDA officials will solicit input from tribal governments and ANCs on USDA policies and issues affecting tribes and will seek to reconcile Indian and Alaska Native needs with the principles of good resource management and multiple use.

d USDA agencies will observe the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Pub. L. No. 95-341.

e USDA officials will work with the tribal governments, tribal high schools, colleges and universities to encourage the development of agribusiness skills, awareness and, where needed, curricula. USDA will share information through the exchange of technical staffs and skills.

f USDA officials will work with other Federal and state agencies with responsibilities to tribal governments and ANCs and will encourage early communication and cooperation among all such organizations.

g Consistent with applicable law or regulation, USDA managers will facilitate tribal and ANC participation in USDA program planning and activities.

5 RESPONSIBILITY

The Secretary of Agriculture is responsible for insuring that this policy is followed. The Secretary has delegated authority to certain USDA agencies for carrying out these policies. The Office of Public Affairs, Native American Programs Office, has primary responsibility for coordinating USDA agencies' programs serving Indians and Alaska Natives. The Office of Advocacy and Enterprise has primary responsibility for coordinating USDA's equal employment, civil rights, and employment-related outreach to Indians and Alaska Natives.

6 INQUIRIES

Questions or comments pertaining to this regulation may be directed to the Office of Public Affairs, Native American Programs Office, Room 112-A, Washington, D.C., 20250-1300. Telephone 202-720-3805.

Further information on USDA programs will be available in the "Guide to USDA Programs for Native Americans."